THE Nation.

AN OPEN LETTER TO BARACK OBAMA

CLASS CONFLICT & OLYMPIC REPRESSION IN CHINA
Christian Parenti
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David Yaffe

THE ECONOMIC CRISIS —AND WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT

FREE FALL
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DOUBLE ISSUE

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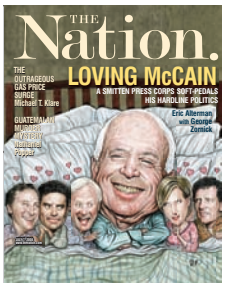
Letters



Update on Sgt. Pequeño

Amherst, Mass.
The July 7 photo essay, "War Is Personal," by Eugene Richards, is, as I'm sure it was intended to be, shocking and heartbreaking. Please, what happened to Sgt. José Pequeño and his mother?
Mary Matthews

Richards Replies

Brooklyn, N.Y.
Space limitations imposed by *The Nation* prevented a fuller story. José Pequeño is in the James A. Haley VA hospital in Tampa, Florida, following a recent surgery, and his mother and sister are with him, as they have been throughout his ordeal. For information about Sergeant Pequeño and how you may be able to assist this remarkable family, please see caringbridge.org/visit/josepequeno.
Eugene Richards

The Devil Redeemed

San Francisco
I have often thought Alexander Cockburn's commentaries are either "right on" or skewed beyond reason. With "The Canonization of St. Tim" ["Beat the Devil," July 7] he has found redemption. This is the most accurate piece of criticism I have seen regarding pundit/anchor behavior after 9/11. I relished his take, too, on the Holy Roman Catholic Media à la Chris Matthews, former altar boy. As a 70-something ex-Catholic, I find it literally does my heart good to see hypocrisy stoned.
Dee Rosenfeld

Can't We All Just Get Along?

New York City
Jon Wiener's "Warriors for Zion—in California" [July 7] dismissing Muslim anti-Semitism at UC, Irvine (UCI) is riddled with errors, distortions and omissions. He incorrectly states that only "one stone [was] thrown at one Jew," and "only" one swastika was found—as if that weren't enough. There have been several threats and assaults, and several swastikas, not to mention the destruction of a Holocaust memorial and regular Muslim Student Union (MSU) events spreading lies about Jews, promoting Israel's destruction, justifying terrorism and insanely claiming there's a holocaust against Palestinians.

Wiener ignores the impact of this—students fearing to wear items identifying them as Jewish or pro-Israel and two students transferring, as recommended by the Hillel-organized Task Force of Jews and non-Jews (not the "ad hoc Jewish group" Wiener claims).

Wiener says that the Office for Civil Rights absolved UCI, but it wasn't for lack of evidence. The decision was based on OCR's determination to no longer afford Jews the same protections as other ethnic groups under Title VI. That's why, as Wiener notes, "three Republican senators" complained about OCR's decision. Six liberal Democratic Congress members also complained, including Brad Sherman and Linda Sanchez of California.

Wiener notes four Jewish students' support for UCI chancellor Michael Drake's efforts but ignores thirteen other students and the more than 1,000 signatories to a petition condemning the chancellor's failure to denounce the MSU programs by name. Wiener emphasizes the MSU's free-speech rights but ignores that administrators should be exercising *their* free-speech rights to denounce the MSU's anti-Semitism—actions advocated by the ACLU. Wiener doesn't mention that Congressman Sherman recently told UCI's chancellor that he had a duty to condemn Muslim anti-Semitism on his campus.

Wiener's attacks on "right-wing Zionists" make little sense. Don't we all, regardless of our politics, support campuses free from bigotry?
Morton A. Klein, *national president*
Susan B. Tuchman, *director*
Center for Law and Justice
Zionist Organization of America

letters@thenation.com

(continued on page 24)

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Change *We* Can Believe In

An Open Letter to Barack Obama

Dear Senator Obama,

We write to congratulate you on the tremendous achievements of your campaign for the presidency of the United States. Your candidacy has inspired a wave of political enthusiasm like nothing seen in this country for decades. In your speeches, you have sketched out a vision of a better future—in which the United States sheds its warlike stance around the globe and focuses on diplomacy abroad and greater equality and freedom for its citizens at home—that has thrilled voters across the political spectrum. Hundreds of thousands of young people have entered the political process for the first time, African-American voters have rallied behind you, and many of those alienated from politics-as-usual have been re-engaged.

You stand today at the head of a movement that believes deeply in the change you have claimed as the mantle of your campaign. The millions who attend your rallies, donate to your campaign and visit your website are a powerful testament to this new movement's energy and passion.

This movement is vital for two reasons: First, it will help assure your victory against John McCain in November. The long night of greed and military adventurism under the Bush Administration, which a McCain administration would continue, cannot be brought to an end a day too soon. An enthusiastic corps of volunteers and organizers will ensure that voters turn out to close the book on the Bush era on election day. Second, having helped bring you the White House, the support of this movement will make possible the changes that have been the platform of your campaign. Only a grassroots base as broad and as energized as the one that is behind you can counteract the forces of money and established power that are a dead weight on those seeking real change in American politics.

We urge you, then, to listen to the voices of the people who can lift you to the presidency and beyond.

Since your historic victory in the primary, there have been troubling signs that you are moving away from the core commitments shared by many who have supported your campaign, toward a more cautious and centrist stance—including, most notably, your vote for the FISA legislation granting telecom companies immunity from prosecution for illegal wiretapping, which angered and dismayed so many of your supporters.

We recognize that compromise is necessary in any democracy. We understand that the pressures brought to bear on those seeking the highest office are intense. But retreating from the stands that have been the signature of your campaign will weaken the movement whose vigorous backing you need in order to win and then deliver the change you have promised.

Here are key positions you have embraced that we believe are essential to sustaining this movement:

§ Withdrawal from Iraq on a fixed timetable.

§ A response to the current economic crisis that reduces the gap between the rich and the rest of us through a more progressive financial and welfare system; public investment to create jobs and repair the country's collapsing infrastructure; fair trade policies; restoration of the freedom to organize unions; and meaningful government enforcement of labor laws and regulation of industry.

§ Universal healthcare.

§ An environmental policy that transforms the economy by shifting billions of dollars from the consumption of fossil fuels to alternative energy sources, creating millions of green jobs.

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Katrina vanden Heuvel on Nancy Pelosi

James S. Henry: Attack of the global pirate bankers

Barbara Crossette: The UN's new human rights chief

VIDEO NATION

Send Karl Rove to jail

RADIO NATION

Annabelle Gurwitch, Naomi Klein

AROUND THE NATION

Post your event

§ An end to the regime of torture, abuse of civil liberties and unchecked executive power that has flourished in the Bush era.

§ A commitment to the rights of women, including the right to choose abortion and improved access to abortion and reproductive health services.

§ A commitment to improving conditions in urban communities and ending racial inequality, including disparities in education through reform of the No Child Left Behind Act and other measures.

§ An immigration system that treats humanely those attempting to enter the country and provides a path to citizenship for those already here.

§ Reform of the drug laws that incarcerate hundreds of thousands who need help, not jail.

§ Reform of the political process that reduces the influence of money and corporate lobbyists and amplifies the voices of ordinary people.

These are the changes *we* can believe in. In other areas—such as the use of residual forces and mercenary troops in Iraq, the escalation of the US military presence in Afghanistan, the resolution of the Israel-Palestine conflict, and the death penalty—your stated positions have consistently varied from the positions held by many of us, the "friends on the left" you addressed in recent remarks. If you win in November, we will work to support your stands when we agree with you and to challenge them when we don't. We look forward to an ongoing and constructive dialogue with you when you are elected President.

Stand firm on the principles you have so compellingly articulated, and you may succeed in bringing this country the change you've encouraged us to believe is possible.

To join this Open Letter, go to www.thenation.com. The letter, with signatures, will be delivered to the Obama campaign before the Democratic National Convention.

Rethinking the Veepstakes

COMMENT

Barack Obama and John McCain are preparing to engage in one of the uglier perversions of America's democratic promise. With the breathless encouragement of media and political elites, the men who would be President are about to choose running mates who, after perfunctory ratification by the Democratic and Republican conventions, could well define the character of the two parties, the politics of the country and the presidency for many years. For all the high-minded talk about selecting the best and brightest, the VP nominees will be chosen with the same purpose Barry Goldwater acknowledged in 1964: "to get more votes." While the next Vice President is to be selected by an individual, and nominated and elected as an afterthought, he or she will become what Gouverneur Morris, one of the wisest of our framers, feared: an American variant of the royal heir apparent.

Of forty-three Presidents so far, nine were Vice Presidents who assumed the position when the chief executive either died

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or quit. Four sitting Vice Presidents were elected to the top job, as was a former Vice President. And in the past fifty years, nine of twelve national elections have featured at least one presidential nominee who was previously nominated for Vice President.

Almost as consequential is the evolution of the office. Gone are the days when, as Harry Truman said, the Veep's job was to "go to weddings and funerals." Dick Cheney was minding the store while George W. Bush read children's books on September 11, 2001. And Cheney's prince regent presidency is merely an extreme variation on an expanding position; don't forget that Al Gore "reinvented government." Is it wise to cede the authority to pick perhaps the next party nominee, and perhaps the next President, to a candidate who seeks merely—or even primarily—to "get more votes," especially in light of less-than-stellar recent selections like Dan Quayle, Joe Lieberman and Cheney?

As parties have lost much of their meaning and campaigns have increasingly become personality contests, the political and media classes have accepted the notion that presidential nominees should have full freedom to name running mates. It wasn't always so. Three decades ago both parties, troubled by Spiro Agnew's failed vice presidency, considered altering the selection process to make it more responsible and democratic. Jimmy Carter proposed in 1976 that, after nominating the presidential candidate, conventions recess for thirty days before nominating VPs. That same year the GOP came close to establishing a date by which candidates had to announce running mates. Some suggested that presidential and vice presidential contenders run as tickets in the primaries, and even that a separate system of VP primaries be established. GOP Senator Jacob Javits proposed electing the President and Vice President separately, a plan more recently embraced by constitutional scholar Akhil Reed Amar. Historian Arthur Schlesinger Jr. and other reformers suggested eliminating the vice presidency altogether; under Schlesinger's plan, the Secretary of State might temporarily fill an executive vacancy until the political parties nominated candidates for a Congressionally supervised election of the new President.

That much democracy would shock the system, as would any move by Obama or McCain to surrender the power to name his running mate. Nothing will change this year, but both parties have the authority, at this summer's conventions, to establish commissions to propose reforms of the VP selection process. Doing so would signal a concern not just for winning votes but for making reform more than just a slogan. JOHN NICHOLS

Olympic Trials

"Go Red for China!" was the slogan unveiled on the Chinese mainland by Pepsi-Cola, whose ubiquitous blue can will, "for a limited time," be red. Pepsi is just one of many companies advertising at the Olympics, at a cost of up to $6 billion, in an attempt to tap a largely untouched market of more than 1 billion. "You've never seen the Olympics in a market that has such domestic commercial scale," Michael Wood, chief executive for greater China at advertising firm Leo Burnett, told the *New York Times*. "When the Olympics were in Los Angeles and Atlanta, the U.S. market was already fully developed."

COMMENT

This is the Olympics the West wanted: games where the

Noted.

KEEPING KOSHER: On May 12 federal agents conducted the largest workplace immigration raid in US history at a kosher meat-processing factory in Postville, Iowa, where they detained more than 300 undocumented Latino workers and threw most of them in jail on dubious criminal charges. The raid received some coverage in the mainstream press but has gained serious traction within the Jewish news media, which have been focusing attention on workplace abuses and animal cruelty at the Postville plant since at least 2004. While the *New York Times* has written eleven articles on the raid, the **Forward** and the **Jewish Week** (both weekly publications) have run twelve and fourteen, respectively, and the JTA—an international Jewish wire service—has posted twenty-five.

Rosalind Spiegel of the Jewish Labor Committee attributes the unusual level of interest on the part of Jewish papers mostly to the size and brutality of the Postville raid, but she says there are other factors to consider. The bust has mobilized people in the Jewish community who don't often take public action—from rabbinical students to summer campers—to ask the question, "What does it mean to keep kosher in this century?" To that end, Jewish groups are developing ways to combine the ritual requirements of keeping kosher with ethical concerns about worker treatment and environmental standards, including community-supported agriculture groups, meat-buying co-ops and a new labeling system, **Hekhsher Tzedek**, to certify products as both kosher and produced in accordance with fair labor practices.

Leah Koenig, editor of the Jewish food and politics blog The Jew & The Carrot, points to this "tradition of doing social justice work from a place rooted in Jewish values" to explain why the raid "struck a nerve" in the Jewish community. "This is who's representing us and making the meat that we eat!" says Koenig. NAOMI SOBEL

OBAMA AROUND THE WORLD: If **Barack Obama**'s recent foreign tour did little to boost his poll numbers at home, it at least proved Obama-mania is a global phenomenon. His arrival in Britain was compared to the second coming of the Beatles; in Germany he turned out a crowd of 200,000, including old-time West Berliners who saw shades of JFK. Not all were as effusive, however; as **Patrick Cockburn** reports, "outside the Green Zone, Iraqis did not pay great attention to the Obama visit." To read dispatches on the tour from Cockburn, **John Nichols**, **Norman Birnbaum**, **Hillel Schenker** and **Graham Usher**, visit thenation.com.

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grandest prize is not a gold medal but a glittering entree to China's seemingly endless army of potential consumers. This is the reason that George W. Bush will attend the opening ceremonies, the first US President to do so on foreign soil, and that in March, mere days before the crackdown in Tibet, Condoleezza Rice, laughably, took China off the State Department's list of nations that abuse human rights.

But if the stakes are high for Western capitalism, for China they may well be higher. Beijing has spent as much as $40 billion to build train stations and Olympic facilities, uprooting more than 1.5 million residents, all in the hope that the games would mark, as the official Xinhua news agency put it, a "historical event in the great renaissance of the Chinese nation."

National renaissance, however, may be giving way to revolt, both internally and from the athletes themselves. The buzz in the lead-up to 8/8/08 is not merely in Beijing. It's in Hunan, Shanghai, Guizhou and earthquake-devastated Sichuan, which have all recently seen mass demonstrations against Communist Party rulers. Provincial authorities are now under extraordinary pressure to crack down on protests. Instructions from Beijing are to "go on a war footing" to head off further upheaval before the games.

The steady percolation of the conflict at home has been matched—or even exceeded—by international anger. Athletes, activists and globe-trotting protesters are poised to raise a panoply of issues, including China's crackdown on Tibet, its support for the Sudanese regime and environmental concerns. The Communist Party has been forced to respond to this pressure cooker by opening a steam valve, announcing on July 24 that public protests will be permitted during the games inside three designated city parks. But as the *Times* reported, "Demonstrators must first obtain permits from local police and also abide by Chinese laws that usually make it nearly impossible to legally picket over politically charged issues."

If Chinese leaders believe that will release enough steam for a smooth games, they could be in for a surprise. Olympic protest may extend beyond the parks. More than 200 athletes from "Team Darfur" may be wearing bracelets and speaking out against human rights abuses. As Jessica Mendoza of the US softball team told the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, "I don't think it's my place to tell China what to do. But I do think it's my place to tell people what is happening. I want people to know that nearly 400,000 people have been killed in Darfur since 2004." Athletes are also angry that the air quality in what Beijing is calling the "green Olympics" could be hazardous to their health.

A public relations catastrophe could be in the making if dissenters manage to break through the media blockade that runs from Beijing's troubling record on press freedom to NBC's soft news coverage. It should not be China's to bear alone; it should be shared by the Western nations and corporations that got the games they wanted.

DAVE ZIRIN

Dave Zirin is The Nation*'s sports correspondent.*

Calvin Trillin, Deadline Poet

What the McCain Campaign Seems To Be Saying About Obama's Recently Concluded Trip Abroad

Obama's rock-star tour is done.
The foreign cheering has abated.
Unseemly's what we thought it was.
We'd like a President who's hated.

Great adulation from abroad
Should not by Presidents be prized.
We are the leaders of the world.
Our President should be despised.

It's better when he's thought to be
A threat to peace and rather slow,
When animosity's so strong
There're many places he can't go.

Then he can say to leaders when
There's something that we hope they'll do,
"Associate yourself with me
And you, then, can be hated too."

Israel, Iran and the Bomb

COMMENT

Israel and the entire Middle East are approaching a stark existential choice: a nuclear holocaust or a nuclear-free Middle East. "Israel will almost surely attack Iran's nuclear sites in the next four to seven months," said Benny Morris, a well-connected professor of Middle Eastern history at Israel's Ben-Gurion University, in a recent *New York Times* op-ed. Morris also predicted that should the attack fail, "a ratcheting up of the Iranian-Israeli conflict to a nuclear level" will occur. Indeed, Israel's air force recently practiced maneuvers for such a strike, and Iran responded by test-firing a missile that can retaliate against Israel. In a desperate effort to assure its local nuclear monopoly, Israel is in danger of courting national suicide.

Can new diplomatic strategies be launched before the hawks take to the air? No question is more important for international security, yet no conventional solution, diplomatic or military, seems likely to resolve it. Even if Israelis did not believe that an Iranian bomb is an existential threat, the consequences of letting Iran proceed with its nuclear weapons program are grim. Syria, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Jordan, all wary of a nuclear-armed Iran, are only a few of the nations in the region that have recently shown a renewed interest in nuclear technology.

How are the Americans and Israelis going to deal with this threat? Serial bombing? That is an admission of failure, not a

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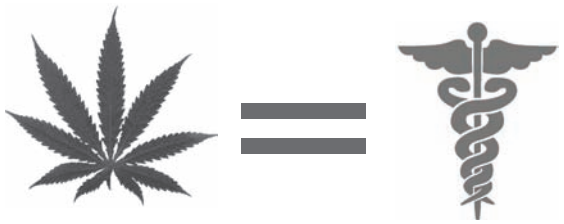
Study of 4000 indicates marijuana discourages use of hard drugs.



A ground-breaking study of 4117 marijuana smokers in California[1] reveals that the 'Gateway Theory' probably had it backwards. Instead of enticing young people to use other drugs, this study suggests that marijuana may have the opposite effect.

This first-ever clinical examination of a large number of medical marijuana applicants depicts a population that is remarkably normal. The percentages earning bachelors' degrees and doctorates are nearly identical to the national numbers. They are, in the main, productive citizens with jobs, homes and families who smoke marijuana weekly or daily – and have in some cases for decades.

For the vast majority of these applicants, their use of cannabis ultimately led to a decrease in the use of tobacco, alcohol, and hard drugs. Asked to compare their current alcohol consumption with their lifetime peak, over 10% claimed to be abstinent and nearly 90% claimed to have cut their drinking in half.

They also report using cannabis as self medication for stress and anxiety – with fewer side effects than the legal pharmaceutical alternatives.

As children, a significant percentage of the male applicants had been treated for ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder). Today their routine morning use of minimal amounts of cannabis strongly suggests that it enhances their ability to concentrate by allowing them to focus on one problem at a time.

As one construction company estimator said, "After two hits and my morning coffee, I'm the best estimator in the company."

Common Sense for Drug Policy
www.CommonSenseDrugPolicy.org www.DrugWarFacts.org
www.ManagingChronicPain.org www.MedicalMJ.org
www.TreatingDrugAddiction.org
www.info@csdp.org

[1] Long term marijuana users seeking medical cannabis in California (2001–2007): demographics, social characteristics, patterns of cannabis and other drug use of 4117 applicants. – Thomas J O'Connell and Ché B Bou Matar
http://www.harmreductionjournal.com/content/4/1/16

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foreign policy. It is a prescription for an escalating series of wars that could eventually lead to Israel's destruction. A solution requires thinking beyond the conventional wisdom. It requires a grand initiative that would fundamentally change relationships in the Middle East.

The key to unlocking a dynamic and comprehensive peace process is Israel's (unacknowledged) nuclear arsenal. To date its purpose has been to deter an overwhelming conventional attack. But absent radical change, the region will eventually become crowded with unstable, nuclear-armed states. The threat of a Middle East bristling with nuclear weapons should be as terrifying to Arab states as it is to Israel. In such a dangerous environment it is inevitable that Israelis will have diminishing confidence in their deterrent. Under the circumstances, it is prudent to consider what might be done, other than bombing Iran. There are sanctions, of course, but few informed Iran scholars believe sanctions will produce the desired results.

Although the outlook seems dire, Iran's nuclear ambitions—and Israel's nuclear arsenal—may have created a diplomatic opportunity. Does Israel's arsenal have value beyond military deterrence? Can it be traded for the security and stability Israel has sought since its inception? Can Israel formulate a "Grand Design for a Nuclear-Free Middle East" linked to a transformative settlement of the issues that have troubled the region since 1948? Is it possible for Israel to be more secure in a nuclear-free Middle East than it is today? The answer to all of these questions is a qualified yes. It's difficult to be optimistic about any Middle East peace initiative, but what is the penalty for trying?

A strategy of peaceful atomic diplomacy is certainly worth pursuing, provided Israel can receive sufficient security guarantees from the United States, the UN, the EU, Iran and its Arab neighbors. It should go without saying that there must be unanimous agreement by all that Israel has the right to exist. To initiate this proposal, Israel (with US support) need only suggest a regional conference. In fact, that first step has been taken: in July, at French President Nicolas Sarkozy's Mediterranean conference, Israel, Syria and the Palestinians signed an agreement to "pursue a mutually and effectively verifiable Middle East Zone free of weapons of mass destruction." To argue whether the signatories were sincere misses the point. The agreement is an opening, a first tentative step that legitimizes discussion of a nuclear-free Middle East. It should thus be pursued by every nation that desires peace and stability in the region.

This initiative is not a case of local idealism. Since January 2007, former Secretaries of State Henry Kissinger and George Shultz, former Defense Secretary William Perry and former Senator Sam Nunn, all cold war nuclear hawks, have twice published *Wall Street Journal* op-eds calling for the global abolition of nuclear weapons. "Nuclear weapons today present tremendous dangers, but also an historic opportunity," they wrote. "U.S. leadership will be required to take the world to the next stage—to a solid consensus for reversing reliance on nuclear weapons globally as a vital contribution to preventing their proliferation into potentially dangerous hands, and ultimately ending them as a threat to the world."

The United States must lead this global transformation and in the process do everything possible to support an Israeli effort to create a stable, secure future in a nuclear-free Middle East. The alternative—the military option, so shortsighted and fraught with dangerous unintended consequences—would set yet another new standard for government incompetence and human stupidity.

JONATHAN SCHELL AND MARTIN J. SHERWIN

Jonathan Schell, the Harold Willens Peace Fellow at The Nation Institute, is the author of The Seventh Decade: The New Shape of Nuclear Danger. *Martin J. Sherwin won the Pulitzer Prize as co-author of* American Prometheus: The Triumph and Tragedy of J. Robert Oppenheimer.

Comix Nation

by VICTOR JUHASZ

A FINE ROMANCE - OBAMA ... BEFORE
OHMYGOD! HE'S PURRRRFECT! THIS TIME I KNOW IT'S FOR REAL. SOOO ARTICULATE, SINCERE, SENSITIVE - NOT A DUMB JOCK. WE SHARE ALL THE SAME VALUES I'M CERTAIN. HE'S JESUS, JFK, AND DENZEL ROLLED INTO ONE HOT PACKAGE. WE'RE GETTING MARRIED!
LATER
!!! DON'T KNOW WHAT'S HAPPENING... MAYBE HE'S NOT MY SOULMATE. HE PROMISED ME CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM BUT HAS TAKEN IT BACK. I NEVER KNEW HE LIKED GUNS. AND... THE BRUTE! HE WANTS TO EXECUTE CHILD RAPISTS!! I EVEN THINK HE'S BEEN TAPPING MY PHONE... THAT COMPLETE TRUST I ONCE HAD IN HIM IS SLIPPING.
HE SEEMS SO MATERIALISTIC AND MONEY HUNGRY NOW. HE STILL TALKS SO SWEET BUT... I FEAR HE'S GOING TO BREAK MY HEART.
WHAT'S NEXT??!! A BAR FIGHT ON OUR HONEYMOON? HIDING MONEY IN OFF SHORE ACCOUNTS? IS IT ME? WHAT'S WRONG WITH WANTING MR. PERFECT??! HOW MANY TIMES DO I NEED TO GO THROUGH THIS?
LIBBY... EXACTLY JUST HOW OLD ARE YOU?
AFTER?

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Alexander Cockburn

Who Wants Yesterday's Papers?

Remember the New World Information Order? Back in the late 1970s and early '80s, you'd find torrid denunciations of the NWIO from right-wing columnists like William Safire. The proposed Order was put together by the nonaligned nations at the UN under the supervision of Seán MacBride, a very great Irishman.

The plan was to try to rectify the vast distortions in global information consequent on the First World's dominance of global circuits. The NWIO itself was an offshoot of a much larger enterprise fostered by the nonaligned nations, the New International Economic Order. All these brave visions were swept away by neoliberalism. A generation later we can look across the world and see that despite the neoliberal counterattack, something vaguely resembling—at least in preliminary outline—a new world information order has arrived all the same.

Here in the United States the old world order is dying. I was reading a *New York Times* article not so long ago about the *Washington Post*'s future under its new publisher, Katharine Weymouth (granddaughter of the late KG). The *NYT* piece referred to the "heavy" audience for the *Post*'s website, saying it "draws more than nine million unique visitors monthly, according to Nielsen Online, making it the third-highest for a newspaper Web site." In a strong month counterpunch.org, the site I co-edit with Jeffrey St. Clair, draws more than 2 million unique visitors—showing that the twelve- to seventeen-inch screen is a great leveler.

When I used to go out leafleting the US base at Upper Heyford near Oxford in the early 1960s, we counted it a good day if we could get 100 US servicemen to accept our pamphlets as they drove through the gates of the base. These days Jeffrey and I can check through the monthly audience totals and see that several thousand people at US military bases have read material on our site. I single out *CounterPunch* because I know the numbers, but there are many others.

The state does not relish the collapse of the old propaganda system. As always, it hates interlopers. The *San Francisco Business Times* reported recently that the FDIC is worried about the reporting on blogs. After the run on IndyMac, Sheila Bair, chair of the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, had this to say: "The blogs were a bit out of control. We're very mindful of the media coverage and blogs in controlling misinformation. All I can say is we're going to continue to stay on top of it. The misinformation that came out over the weekend fed a lot of depositors' fears."

Though the Internet is playing only a secondary role in an "old media" imbroglio, a particularly funny example of the sclerosed nature of the official press is unwinding right under our noses. It involves reporting by the *National Enquirer*, always snooted by the heavyweight press the same way the *Star* was in 1992 when it broke the Clinton-Flowers scandal.

On October 10, 2007, the online edition of *National Enquirer* ran an exposé under the headline "Presidential Cheating Scandal! Alleged Affair Could Wreck John Edwards's Campaign Bid." The story began, "Sources have come forward to charge that the 'other woman' previously worked on Edwards' campaign.... A source close to the woman, whose name is being withheld by The National Enquirer, says that she confessed to having an affair in phone calls and emails, saying that her work with Edwards soon exploded into romance."

Edwards promptly issued a denial. Though she wasn't named in the *Enquirer*'s story, so did Rielle Hunter, on a website. Not a breath of an alleged adultery by a presidential contender ruffled the pages of the nation's mainstream papers, despite the fact that the *Enquirer* has many proven scoops under its belt, including Rush Limbaugh's love affair with Oxycontin and Jesse Jackson's love child. Though down in numbers from its glory days, the *Enquirer* still has a circulation of 2,760,000.

On December 19, with the early Democratic primaries looming, the *Enquirer* struck again. It said Rielle Hunter was in an advanced stage of pregnancy with Edwards's child and—after the *Enquirer*'s October story—had been whisked out of New York City and lodged in an upscale gated community in Chapel Hill. Edwards, flanked by Elizabeth, issued further passionate denials. The *New York Times*, nine weeks away from running a long, highly speculative story about John McCain's possible relationship with the much younger Vicki Iseman, kept its mouth shut, as did the rest of the mainstream press. Edwards was able to fight his way through the first primaries without having to battle charges from the national press that he was cheating on a sick wife and had a pregnant mistress stowed back in North Carolina.

On July 22 the *Enquirer* lowered the boom on Edwards. The weekly reported that it had nailed him visiting Hunter and child in the Beverly Hilton hotel in Los Angeles. The *Enquirer*'s reporters staked out Edwards and Hunter, ambushed the former as he stepped out of the elevator and pursued the white-faced Edwards till he took refuge in one of the hotel's lavatories, at which time he seems to have called hotel security on his cellphone and was escorted to safety. A hotel doorman confirmed the story later to Fox News.

So far there's not been a word in the mainstream press, even though Edwards is certainly a figure of public interest, having been named as a strong contender to be in an Obama cabinet. Of course, there might be compassion for the very popular Elizabeth Edwards, but that's not enough to explain the dogged silence. The *Times* and the *Post* are quite prepared to investigate, or at least infer, possible sexual shenanigans—as the *Times*'s floating of the McCain-Iseman imbroglio made clear. The most convincing explanation, it seems to me, is simple snobbery. The mainstream press reckons that any acknowledgment of papers like the *Enquirer* and the *Star* as getting credible scoops is distressing to its dignity and increasingly threadbare "credibility." The sans-culottes are storming the Bastille on a daily basis. ■

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Katha Pollitt

Flocking to Faith

In the old days politicians would slip preachers some hundreds under the table, and preachers would deliver the flock on election day. It was borderline illegal, but at least it left the Constitution alone. The same could not be said of the Bush Administration's faith-based initiative, a political bribe to the religious right that put a hole in the First Amendment big enough for Christ himself to walk through. Given the dismal results of the initiative—millions wasted, many lawsuits, embarrassments like special Christians-only prison units and Faith Works, which aspired to bring "homeless addicts to Christ"—you would think getting rid of federal handouts to churches for social services would be one change we'd all be ready to believe in. But no. As he announced earlier this summer, Barack Obama plans to open the spigot even wider, beginning with half a billion dollars for summer classes for 1 million poor kids and presumably moving on to help for prisoners, addicts and other unfortunates. Perhaps worn down by years of being bashed as elitists ignorant of the real America, many liberals and progressives seem prepared to go along. Difficult as it is to dissent from the feel-good community spirit in which Obama casts his proposals—who wants to be the curmudgeon while people are in obvious need?—this is a major failure of nerve.

Obama may have given his initiative an inclusive-sounding name—the President's Council for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships—and he may insist that with proper oversight government money can go to religious institutions without going to religious purposes, like proselytizing. He wouldn't let churches discriminate in hiring for these programs or provide services only to their own (although the Supreme Court permits religious discrimination in church hiring, even for janitorial jobs). He says churches will have to obey their state's antidiscrimination laws, which would mean that in twenty states churches that consider homosexuality an abomination would have to hire gays anyway. It would be hard to overestimate the amount of bureaucratic energy required to enforce these provisions. Besides, money is fungible—a grant for the prison-ministry-that-never-mentions-Jesus frees up that many dollars for Sunday school or a new car for the Reverend.

Although Obama stresses his determination to help "the smallest storefront churches and mosques" apply for funding, in real life the religious organizations with the bureaucratic know-how and political connections to go after the money will be the same as under Bush. Much of the funding, then, will still go to socially conservative white Christians. Indeed, that's the point, as analysts acknowledge when they cite the measure as part of Obama's attempt to win over this largely Republican demographic. He's not going to win their votes by cutting them out in favor of inner-city mini-mosques. In fact, it doesn't look like he's going to do it at all; despite the God talk, Obama's polling only 22 percent of the white evangelical vote, which is exactly what the notoriously religiously tone-deaf John Kerry got in 2004.

Of course, winning votes isn't the only reason Obama favors faith-based funding. He also says that our problems are "too big for government alone to solve" so "we need an all hands on deck approach." I'm all for volunteering, but tell me again why we've given up on the idea of publicly providing people with the services they need? In other wealthy industrialized countries, children learn to read in school, not the church basement. Poor families get income supports that enable them to buy their own groceries; they don't have to eat in soup kitchens. Why does Obama want to subsidize churches rather than beef up our frayed public realm? Every dollar that goes to a faith-based program is a dollar that doesn't go to a cash-starved public service—to libraries, Head Start, community mental health clinics and so on.

Obama is right that our problems are very big—but that's an argument against giving money to churches. For instance, Obama mentioned the good work religious folk are doing to rebuild New Orleans. I don't mean to take away from their dedication and accomplishments, but volunteers using their vacations to rehab houses is not going to bring that city back to life. By exaggerating what religious organizations can accomplish, Obama is continuing the belittling of government that was such a major theme of the Bush Administration, and for the same reason: fully funding the kinds of programs needed to achieve the goals of the faith-based initiative—"ending poverty," for example—would require a ton of money and a much deeper rethinking of our national priorities than Obama, or the Democratic Party, is willing to embrace.

About that pesky separation of church and state. Obama says he wants to ramp up church provision of social services because the churches know the people best. I'd question whether they even know their own parishioners best—quick, Pastor, how many gays are in your choir? how many women in the pews have had those abortions you sermonize against?—let alone the larger community. And what about the 16 percent found by a Pew survey to be atheists, agnostics or "nothing in particular"? Are they any less capable of doing good on the government's dime? You'd never know it, but the number of God-free Americans—already more than Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Mormons, all the black churches, Jews and Muslims put together—is growing. In fact, another round of faith-based-funding scandals might be just what we need to put us right up there with the born-agains.

* * *

The Chicago Abortion Fund, which helps poor women pay for abortions, is so low on cash it's been unable to keep up with the flood of desperate women who call each week. You can be sure no faith-based handouts are flowing its way. Even a small donation could help a girl stay in school or a single mother provide for the children she already has. You can mail your check to PO Box 2751, Chicago, IL 60690. Or donate online at chicagoabortionfund.com. ■

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NG HAN GUAN/AP PHOTO

Migrant construction workers in Beijing protest withheld salary, January 2007.

CLASS STRUGGLE IN THE NEW CHINA

Peasants and workers are demanding their rights—and the government is responding.

by CHRISTIAN PARENTI

The countryside around Da Ba village in southwestern China's Chongqing province is steep and verdant but swathed in the bitter smog of many small, coal-fired factories and power plants. These mountains are rich with veins of lignite, and because the area is only a few hours from Chongqing—the eponymous provincial capital and megacity you've likely never heard of (12 million and counting)—it is dotted with small power plants, mines, quarries and cement factories that feed the metropolis.

Da Ba is in many ways a typical Chinese village. Its center has a few blocks of tightly packed two- and three-story projects of socialist-style housing nestled along a dirty creek and a cramped valley crossroads. On the edge of town, the walls of farmhouse compounds are painted with bold red characters exhorting obedience to the one-child policy.

And as in many other places in China, the farmers of Da Ba are fighting to save their land from those who want to seize it in the name of progress and profit.

Here in Da Ba, the trouble began in October 2005, when the village party secretary, Lu Cheng Cun, told more than 600 farmers they would have to sell their land to the privately owned Tian Hong Mine Ltd. so it could be excavated for coal.

The farmers refused to sell. "We could not survive on the price they offered. We could not buy other land with it," says a woman named Chun. The protest leaders have asked that I use only their first names, and our meeting is held secretly after elaborate efforts to confuse and avoid the police.

"They said this is an important energy project and that we were getting in the way," explains Chun. The farmers still refused. Then several leaders were jailed and beaten. The first was Yong Sam Lan, a 50-year-old woman, jailed and beaten twice. Police raided family homes, locking up and battering those they thought were ringleaders.

"They beat my mother so badly she was in hospital for two months with a brain injury," says one of the protesting villagers, a woman in her mid-40s named Lin. In all, they say, eight of the farmers have been hospitalized from beatings by local goons, and many others have been roughed up.

Perhaps just as bad, the villagers were also prevented from working their land and thus stripped of their livelihoods. Eventually about 200 people signed away their property, but most held out and filed a lawsuit against the local authorities. For three years, through arbitration and two trials, they have fought, all the while living under intimidation from local thugs and the police.

This situation is not unique. Across China there is rising rural and urban protest—or, if you will, burgeoning class struggle. As the economy moves from Maoist socialism to a strange type of quasi-Maoist capitalism, farmers are fighting off land grabs, which, as in the case of Da Ba, are often linked to industry's voracious appetite for space and resources. Typically, the land grabs involve local government officials working

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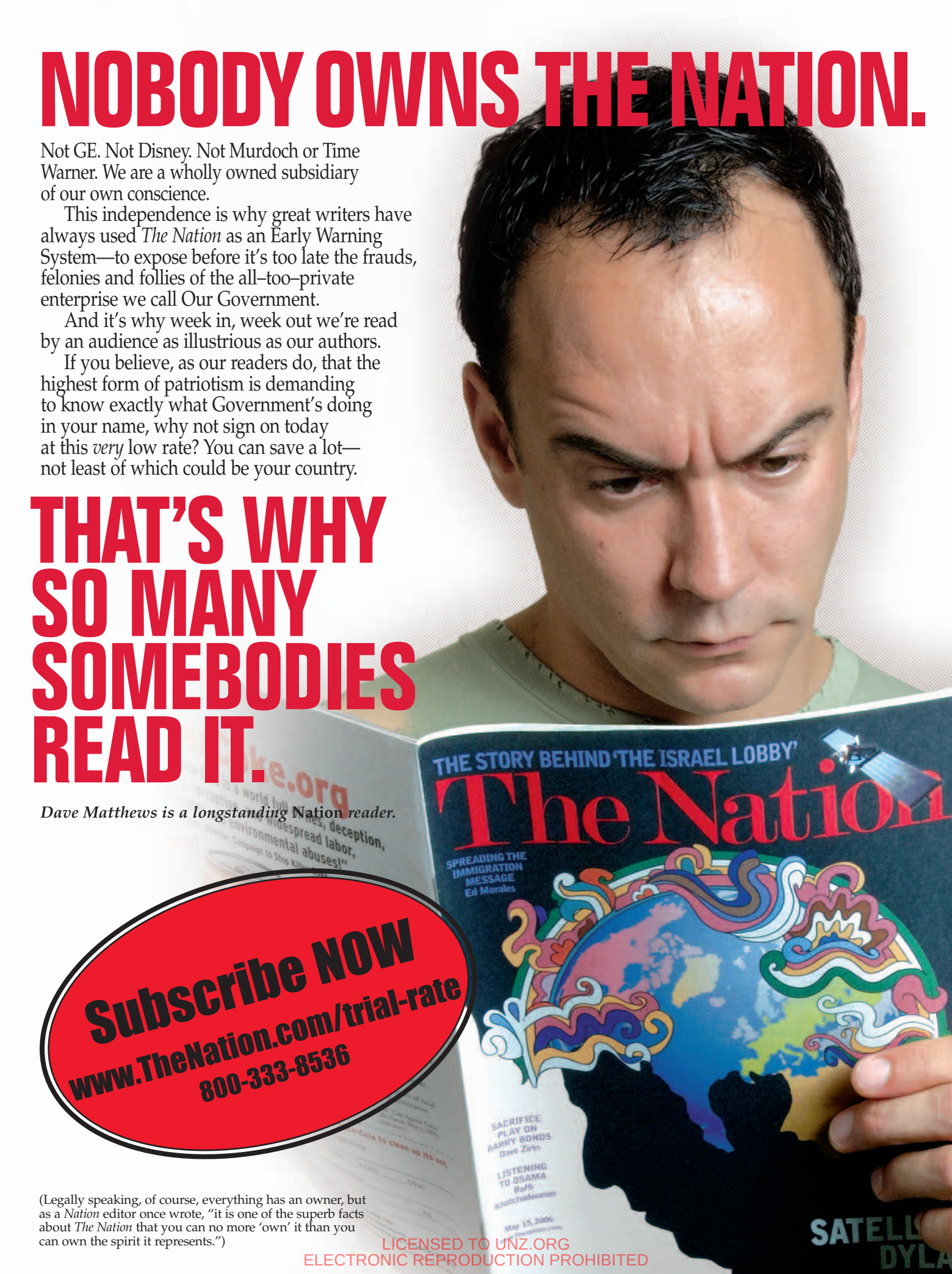
Dave Matthews is a longstanding **Nation** *reader.*



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with large, mostly state-owned but partly private businesses.

The land struggles are just one part of a rural crisis that is also, by extension, an urban crisis. An estimated 200 million workers have left the countryside for cities in the past thirty years. Once in the cities, these displaced farmers cum urban workers often find themselves forced to battle against employers and local governments for basic rights and even unpaid wages.

According to the Ministry of Public Security, the wave of protests—rural and urban—peaked in 2005 with roughly 87,000 "public order disturbances," a 7 percent rise over the previous year. After that, the government stopped reporting such numbers. Usually the protests are small, spontaneous and peaceful—like those staged by grieving parents after the Sichuan earthquake.

But at times the conflicts involve thousands of people clashing with armed police, leaving casualties on both sides. Perhaps most interesting, many of the urban labor strikes are not spontaneous but are planned by an incipient underground trade union movement.

When the Western press has covered these protests, it has generally cast the story as one of China being on the edge of chaos. But China's new class struggle may actually lead to broader prosperity and thus deeper stability. China still has a command economy, a form of Asian capitalism that retains a very large public sector and uses extensive state planning. If the central government responds to the protests fairly—using its might to rein in the corrupt local authorities, who are often in cahoots with business interests to repress workers' aspirations—the current wave of protest could usher in needed reforms, a more equitable distribution of wealth and greener forms of growth.

So far the signals are not all bad. Two years ago the protest-spooked central government abolished the agricultural land tax and gave farmers greater legal protections. And it has just passed a new and, at least on paper, progressive labor law. Among other things, the law requires employers to give workers formal contracts that last for a set period; it also requires severance pay and mandates that workers can be fired only with cause. After two short-term contracts, employers must offer open-ended, tenure-style employment. Companies that don't comply face stiff penalties. (Business-friendly critics say the law introduces "European-style inflexibility.") The central government has also announced its desire to have the official state union federation—the All-China Federation of Trade Unions—organize 80 percent of private companies by the end of this year.

These directives face resistance from local governments, which operate with a lot of legal and illegal autonomy. But even as the central government's reach is limited, it's significant that it has demonstrated a willingness to move in response to pressure from below. In the face of unrest, Wen Jiabao—China's down-to-earth prime minister and second-most-powerful politician, who famously spoke at Tiananmen Square in 1989 and survived with his health and career intact—has called for progressive reforms and issued stark, if cryptic, warnings like, "The speed of the fleet is not determined by the fastest vessel; rather, it is determined by the slowest one."

If there is a traditional epicenter to rural protest and local corruption, it is Anhui province, about 300 miles inland from Shanghai on the Yangtze River. In 1978 the now-storied farmers of Anhui were the first to demand the right to cultivate individual plots rather than farm communally. By 1983 this "household responsibility system" became the national norm. Two years ago several rebellious Anhui villages stopped paying land taxes. It was in response to that protest that the central government abolished the levy.

The local Anhui leadership epitomizes the problem of provincial and district-level corruption. In the northern Anhui city of Fuyang, a Chinese NGO has said it will show me around. But at the last minute it backs out because the staff is under "too much pressure." It's not Big Brother in Beijing they fear but Little Brother Gangster—the local government.

Recently several judges were jailed for bribery and the former vice governor was executed. One local district blew a third of its public funds to build a replica of the US Capitol building, which they call the White House. This spring an anticorruption whistleblower named Li Guofu was arrested and then found dead in his Fuyang jail cell.

If there is a traditional epicenter to rural protest and local corruption, it is Anhui province, where rebellious villages stopped paying land taxes.

Officials in Fuyang seem compelled to steal and lie even when they confess and apologize for their crimes. In 2007 Zhang Shaocang, a party chief and executive of a state-owned power company, went on trial for embezzlement. In court he read a four-page "letter of apology." Alas, the letter was plagiarized. He had lifted it from a similar trial in another province.

Meanwhile, in the countryside the farmers suffer. The land around Fuyang is flat and the straight dirt roads are lined with poplars, whose round leaves make a soothing rustle in the breeze. Agriculture here is supplemented with garbage-sorting. The air smells of burning plastic. "They are recycling electronics," explains a local. "You can't eat the fish here anymore—the streams are all polluted."

My local driver's wife has leukemia. He asks, "Is medicine for that very expensive in America?" A woman from the city jokes that "Fuyang is famous. We're known for pollution, corruption, disease, babies with enlarged heads and for being very flat and getting flooded by the Yangtze."

On the edge of the city farmers have faced land seizures, as in Chongqing, but no one will talk about the protests. They are simply too frightened. They *will* talk about the poverty that is driving so many farmers to the cities in search of work. "Young people are abandoning the villages for the cities because farming pays so little," explains a constable. Most farmers here earn only $2,000–$3,000 a year—a tractor costs about $50,000. "We have villages of babies and grandparents only," says the constable. Remittances from the city appear on the landscape

Christian Parenti is a Nation *contributing editor. Research support was provided by the Puffin Foundation Investigative Fund at The Nation Institute.*

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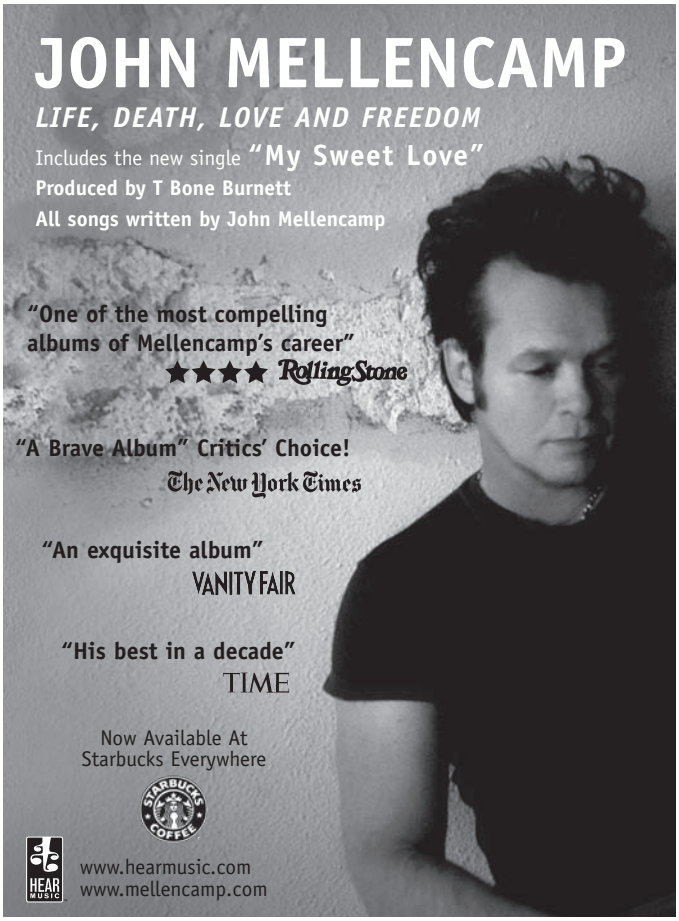

MILITANT ATHEISM: A THREAT TO CIVIL LIBERTIES?

In Defense of Religion is a book that attacks head-on and in detail the recent anti-religion books by Christopher Hitchens, Richard Dawkins, Sam Harris, and Daniel Dennett. It alerts readers to the implications of their intolerant thinking for democracy and personal freedom.

It also makes a case for the great religions at their best and re-thinks what religion essentially is. It proposes that science go beyond question-begging rationalist assumptions and study devotion, worship, mysticism, and the miraculous.

The author, John Gibson (John W. Gibson Jr.) has also written Against Fundamentalism and Plato.

Published by Wheatmark

as a smattering of new construction and small stores.

Almost all those who stay behind supplement farming with work in local crafts factories, the Township and Village Enterprises. In this county, there are thirty-one of these workshops, all of them public-private joint ventures. They make wicker furniture and baskets from the fast-growing poplars. The products, which look sort of Amish, are mostly exported to the United States and Germany.

In Fuyang there are eight Special Economic Zones (SEZs), smaller imitations of the free-trade experiments on the coast, where businesses can set up shop and not pay taxes for five years. My guide, who sells Amway and works for the local government, has asked me not to tell anyone I am a journalist; she, like everyone here, lives in constant, gnawing fear of those in power.

We meet with the deputy director of the zone, Lou Hui Hong; he seems to think I am some sort of industrial fixer and soon offers me a kickback. "If you get $20 million of investment in here, I can make sure you receive 1.3 percent of it."

Most rural migrants, like the farmers leaving Fuyang and the rebellious and now landless farmers in Da Ba, make their way to places like Shenzhen, a sprawling city of 12 million just across the border from Hong Kong. In 1979 it was just a cluster of fishing villages, but then Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping drew a circle around it on a map and created the country's first and now biggest SEZ. Here long hours of migrant toil fuel China's boom.

China's SEZs are famous for drawing businesses from Hong Kong, Taiwan and Japan that subcontract for US companies like Wal-Mart and Apple. But it is abundant, cheap and disciplined labor that really drives the boom. In fact, most of the capital that has built up China's new economy is internally generated. According to some estimates, up to 90 percent of the capital accumulated during the reform era has been Chinese—either state money or reinvested profits from fast-growing Chinese businesses.

Lenovo is the textbook case of how Chinese business is growing. In the 1980s it was a simple supplier of computer parts; twenty years later, after continual reinvestment and state protection, it was wealthy enough to buy IBM's PC division.

But this fast growth based on cheap labor rests on the foundation of what can only be called China's culture of fear. At the center of that culture are several factors; crucial among them is the country's "household registration system," *hukou*. These laws essentially make internal migration illegal and connect all social services to one's official address of origin. An estimated 60 to 70 percent of industrial, service, mining and construction workers are ex-farmers, migrants from the countryside with no *hukou*—that is, with no political rights. The *hukou* system has slowly eased, but it still weighs on the minds of migrants, instilling caution and even shame. "I have no *hukou*, so I have to pay bribes for everything," says a cabdriver in Shenzhen. "The police take money from us every month."

In Chongqing a freelance porter, called a *pang-pang*, shows me the back-alley, two-room hovel where he lives with his wife, an infant and four other migrants. "I would love to live in a high-rise, but with no *hukou* they demand more money and pay less at jobs. And I will have to pay to get the child *hukou* so he can go

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to school." The price for that will be roughly $2,400. All the *pang-pang* here are migrants, and they all pay petty bribes to the local police and security guards, who monitor the streets and malls where they work. Some *pang-pang* tried to organize against the bribes and get a lawyer, but it was too expensive and they were intimidated by threats that they would be deported back to the countryside.

The current culture of fear also seems to be a legacy of Mao's cultlike rule and its culminating act, the Cultural Revolution. "People don't trust each other anymore," says a young lawyer. "It's the Cultural Revolution. Children denounced parents. No one trusts each other anymore." At the revolution's peak in the late 1960s, Chinese society began to collapse into an open-ended campaign of violent hysteria, with Salem-style denunciations and self-criticism mass meetings. Warring factions of the fanatical Red Guard (grassroots student formations) fought pitched gun battles against one another and at times against the army. Intellectuals were banished to the countryside; schoolchildren were drilled to revere Mao as a god.

The official death toll was about 35,000. At least 750,000—some estimates range much higher—were charged with various offenses, jailed and beaten. In the end, the Cultural Revolution instilled a corrosive paranoia—anyone could be a snitch; obedience to authority was one's righteous duty. It's an attitude that Chinese capitalism has found very useful, because it makes peasant and worker mobilization difficult.

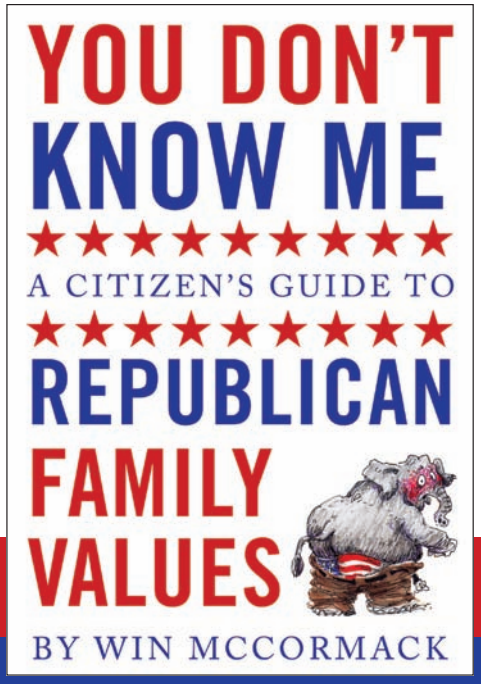
There is also a growing system of photo surveillance and biometric IDs—even though such monitoring is notoriously unreliable at catching lawbreakers. The effect (especially when laid over the *hukou* system and Mao's legacy) is to instill more quiet self-policing.

Yet despite all this, Chinese workers are mobilizing and demanding their rights. By one estimate a thousand people a day are engaged in industrial action in and around Shenzhen. At least that's what several labor rights organizations claim. These NGOs, based in Hong Kong, say the Chinese government secretly leaked the stats.

Over Sichuan hot pot—assorted tripe, fish and tofu boiled in clove-spiced oil—I meet two grassroots leaders of one such wildcat labor struggle. Liang Sho Shen and Lu Wen Kang are migrant workers in the city of Guangxi, just north of the Vietnamese border. They worked for the Aluminum Corporation of China, a large state-owned firm. Liang is short with awkward features but has a strange charisma. Scars cover his left arm and neck, the legacy of molten aluminum that splashed him in an accident.

He explains that migrant workers with no *hukou* were paid less than the legal minimum wage. "So, Lu and I started reading the labor law. We organized large meetings at the factory." Their only demand was equal pay for workers with and without *hukou*. "It is illegal not to pay the same rate. We were only following the law." He describes mass meetings that sound more like factory-floor rallies and work stoppages.

The workers never gave their association a name; that would have been too much like creating an organization, which is ille-



Which leader of the evangelical movement died of autoerotic asphyxiation while dressed in two rubber wet suits and diving gloves and slippers?

Which anti-abortion crusader bragged about having sex with a mule and featured pictures of bestiality and homosexual acts on his Web site?

Which 44 Republicans have been involved in sex crimes against children?

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—ARIANNA HUFFINGTON, author of *Right Is Wrong: How the Lunatic Fringe Hijacked America, Shredded the Constitution, and Made Us All Less Safe*

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gal. And Liang insists that the workers were not "protesting" but just trying to communicate with their bosses. Protesting, of course, would also have been illegal. Apparently the bosses got the message—and decided to fire the organizers.

As the beer flows, Liang dilates on workers' rights and unfolds the confused jumble of half-discarded ideas, taboos and impressions that act as tools for, and restraints upon, building a real trade union movement. "Ideology does not matter anymore. China is socialist, but we are capitalist now. We are not interested in politics. We just want rights for migrant workers. Like Mao during the revolution."

Now that they have been fired, Liang, Lu and the other leaders are going to sue for wrongful termination. In a way, they're lucky they were only fired. On January 16 gangsters in Nanjing chopped off the hand of a migrant worker who demanded back wages.

To help labor activists like Liang and Lu organize, there are about a dozen "worker centers" across Shenzhen. These are small NGOs that offer legal advice, worker education and a chance for laborers to network. All the centers have connections with foreign-funded NGOs in Hong Kong. Sometimes staff from the centers will visit factories and dormitories where independent organizing efforts are under way. These struggles typically revolve around immediate issues like unpaid wages. Rarely is the goal creation of a lasting, independent union.

A dozen 'worker centers' across Shenzhen offer legal advice, worker education and a chance for laborers to network.

The most famous of these labor NGOs is the Dagongzhe Migrant Worker Center. Its leader is Huang Qingnan. In November 2007 Huang and others at the center were attacked by knife-wielding thugs. It was the second time the center had been trashed and the third time Huang had been assaulted. This time it was bad—the center was smashed up, several staff were injured and Huang was practically hacked to death, almost losing a leg.

Reached by phone, Huang, just emerging from the last of his reconstructive surgeries, explained the situation as it now stands. "We think the local district government attacked us," he says. "They sent plainclothes members of the municipal enforcement department. They thought we would scare off investment.

"In two or three months I probably won't be giving any interviews," says Huang. "We are starting to work with the official union, and they do not like interviews."

Why would this underground labor hero work with the government? By any measure, the state-controlled All-China Federation of Trade Unions is not an independent workers' institution. At first glance it hardly seems able to leverage concessions from business. But in China it is the only legal way for workers to organize. Across the country, at least nineteen workers are in prison for attempting to organize independently, and a dozen others have just been released. Over the past two years the labor rights movement—the worker centers in Shenzhen and their NGO allies in Hong Kong—has come around to the idea of working with the ACFTU.

And again, there are signs that elements of the central government are concerned about the rights of labor: from 2003 to 2007, the Ministry of Labor and Social Security helped migrant workers receive more than $6 billion in unpaid back wages. Most labor advocates think much more was actually owed, but it is an example of the central government siding with workers against local authorities and employers.

Huang explains that the local branch of the ACFTU is "trying to open channels" to the district-level government that attacked him. He hopes this mediation will extend legitimacy and safety to the Dagongzhe Migrant Worker Center, which has moved its offices because of the November assault and more threats.

Is this collaboration with the ACFTU capitulation or pragmatism? To understand better, I track down Han Dongfang. A legend in the Chinese labor scene with movie-star looks, Han was the main labor leader at Tiananmen Square in 1989. As a railway worker he had started an independent trade union, and it was he, more than anyone, who brought workers into the student protest.

After the June 4 crackdown, when the army killed at least a few hundred people, Han was arrested and thrown in prison. Housed with tuberculosis patients, he contracted the disease and was eventually released to die at home. But the US labor movement took an interest in his case, and the Service Employees International Union managed to bring Han to New York, where he was treated and had one lung removed.

In 1993, his health restored, Han tried to return to China but was denied re-entry. Since then he has worked from Hong Kong running a Western-funded NGO called the China Labour Bulletin. Han acts as an ally to China's underground trade union organizers, often filing lawsuits on their behalf in mainland courts.

To my surprise, Han agrees with Huang Qingnan. "There is no possibility other than working within the ACFTU," says Han. "What we are urging the workers to do is to maintain their organization, to stay in the factories, but to bring in the state union."

Is the goal to take over the ACFTU? Han, who speaks perfect English, says, "No, no. I think 'renovate' is a better word." There seems to be a growing consensus among labor activists both in China and Hong Kong: pragmatic cooperation with the ACFTU is the path forward. "We have to be realistic about the conditions, the repression, but also about the workers, how they think and view the world," says Han. "Most of them just want a little bit better life; they are busy with their families, working long hours."

This strategy starts to make sense after a young law student urges me to consider the long view: "China has serious environmental problems. There is inequality and poverty. But on the other hand, China hasn't been this prosperous and stable and united in more than 100 years. People are poor, but there is no famine, there is no war. Wages and living standards are rising. In many ways these are very good times, and people know it." ■

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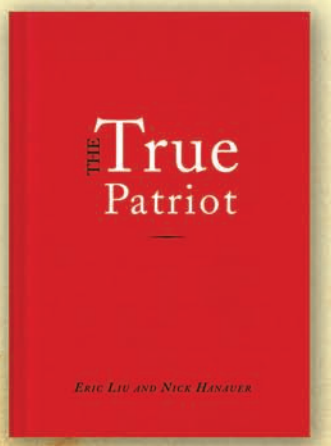

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Economic Free Fall?

We are flirting with catastrophe, a danger compounded by dependence on foreign creditors.

by WILLIAM GREIDER

Washington can act with breathtaking urgency when the right people want something done. In this case, the people are Wall Street's titans, who are scared witless at the prospect of their historic implosion. Congress quickly agreed to enact a gargantuan bailout, with more to come, to calm the anxieties and halt the deflation of Wall Street giants. Put aside partisan bickering, no time for hearings, no need to think through the deeper implications. We haven't seen "bipartisan cooperation" like this since Washington decided to invade Iraq.

In their haste to do anything the financial guys seem to want, Congress and the lame-duck President are, I fear, sowing far more profound troubles for the country. First, while throwing our money at Wall Street, government is neglecting the grave risk of a deeper catastrophe for the real economy of producers and consumers. Second, Washington's selective generosity for influential financial losers is deforming democracy and opening the path to an awesomely powerful corporate state. Third, the rescue has not succeeded, not yet. Banking faces huge losses ahead, and informed insiders assume a far larger federal bailout will be needed—after the election. No one wants to upset voters by talking about it now. The next President, once in office, can break the bad news. It's not only about the money—with debate silenced, a dangerous line has been crossed. Hundreds of billions in open-ended relief has been delivered to the largest and most powerful mega-banks and investment firms, while government offers only weak gestures of sympathy for struggling producers, workers and consumers.

The bailouts are rewarding the very people and institutions whose reckless behavior caused this financial mess. Yet government demands nothing from them in return—like new rules for prudent behavior and explicit obligations to serve the national interest. Washington ought to compel the financial players to rein in their appetite for profit in order to help save the country from a far worse fate: a depressed economy that cannot regain its normal energies. Instead, the Federal Reserve, the Treasury, the Democratic Congress and of course the Republicans meekly defer to the wise men of high finance, who no longer seem so all-knowing.

Let's review the bidding to date. After panic swept through the global financial community this spring, the Federal Reserve and Treasury rushed in to arrange a sweetheart rescue for Bear Stearns, expending $29 billion to take over the brokerage's ruined assets so JPMorgan Chase, the prestigious banking conglomerate, would agree to buy what was left. At the same time, the Fed and Treasury provided a series of emergency loans and liquidity for endangered investment firms and major banks. Investors were not persuaded. Their panic was not "mental," as former McCain adviser Phil Gramm recently complained. The collapse of the housing bubble had revealed the deep rot and duplicity within the financial system. When investors tried to sell off huge portfolios of spoiled financial assets like mortgage bonds, nobody would buy them. In fact, no one can yet say how much these once esteemed "safe" investments are really worth.

The big banks and investment houses are also stuck with lots of bad paper, and some have dumped it on their unwitting customers. The largest banks and brokerages have already lost enormously, but lending portfolios must shrink a lot more—at least $1 trillion, some estimate. So wary shareholders are naturally dumping financial-sector stocks.

Most recently, the investors' fears were turned on Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, the huge quasi-private corporations that package and circulate trillions in debt securities with implicit federal backing. Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson (formerly of Goldman Sachs) boldly proposed a $300 billion commitment to buy up Fannie Mae stock and save the plunging share price—that is, save the shareholders from their mistakes. So much for market discipline. For everyone else, Washington recommends a cold shower.

Talk about warped priorities! The government puts up $29 billion as a "sweetener" for JP Morgan but can only come up with $4 billion for Cleveland, Detroit and other urban ruins. Even the mortgage-relief bill is a tepid gesture. It basically asks, but does not compel, the bankers to act kindlier toward millions of defaulting families.

A generation of conservative propaganda, arguing that markets make wiser decisions than government, has been destroyed by these events. The interventions amount to socialism, American style, in which the government decides which private enterprises are "too big to fail." Trouble is, it was the government itself that created most of these mastodons—including the all-purpose banking conglomerates. The mega-banks arose in the 1990s, when a Democratic President and Republican Congress repealed the New Deal–era Glass-Steagall Act, which prevented commercial banks from blending their business with investment banking. That combination was the source of incestuous self-dealing and fraudulent stock valuations that led directly to the Crash of 1929 and the Great Depression that followed.

Even before Congress and Bill Clinton repealed the law, the Federal Reserve had aggressively cleared the way by unilaterally authorizing Citigroup to cross the line. Wall Street proceeded, with accounting tricks described as "modernization," to re-create the same scandals from the 1920s in more sophisticated fashion. The financial crisis began when these gimmicky innovations blew up.

William Greider is The Nation*'s national affairs correspondent and a fellow at The Nation Institute. His latest book is* Come Home, America, *due out in February from Rodale.*

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Democrats who imagine they can reap partisan advantage from this crisis don't know the history. The blame is bipartisan; so also is the disgrace. In 1980, before Ronald Reagan even came to town, Democrats deregulated the financial system by repealing federal interest-rate ceilings and other regulatory restraints—a step that doomed the savings and loan industry and eliminated a major competitor for the bankers. Democrats have collaborated with Republicans on behalf of their financial patrons every step of the way.

The same legislation also repealed the federal law prohibiting usury—the predatory practices that ruin debtors of modest means by lending on terms that ensure borrowers will fail. Usurious lending is now commonplace in America, from credit cards and "payday loans" to the notorious subprime mortgages. The prohibition on usury really involves an ancient moral principle, one common to Judaism, Christianity and Islam: people of great wealth must not be allowed to use it to ruin others who lack the same advantages. A decent society cannot endure it.

Putting the secretive Federal Reserve in charge of economic reform would further eviscerate democracy, not to mention economic justice.

The fast-acting politicians may hope to cover over their past mistakes before the public figures out what's happening (that is, who is screwing whom). But the Federal Reserve has a similar reason to move aggressively: the Fed was a central architect and agitator in creating the circumstances that led to the collapse in Wall Street's financial worth. The central bank tipped its monetary policy hard in one direction—favoring capital over labor, creditors over debtors, finance over the real economy—and held it there for roughly twenty-five years. On one side, it targeted wages and restrained economic growth to make sure workers could not bargain for higher compensation in slack labor markets. On the other side, it stripped away or refused to enforce prudential regulations that restrained the excesses of banking and finance. In *The Nation* a few years back, I referred to Alan Greenspan as the "one-eyed chairman" [September 19, 2005] who could see inflation in the real economy—even when it didn't exist—but was blind to the roaring inflation in the financial system.

The Fed's lopsided focus on behalf of the monied interests, combined with its refusal to apply regulatory laws with due diligence, eventually destabilized the overall economy. Trying to correct for previous errors, the Fed, with its overzealous free-market ideology, swung monetary policy back and forth to extremes, first tightening credit without good reason, then rapidly cutting interest rates to nearly zero. This erratic behavior encouraged a series of financial bubbles in interest-sensitive assets—first the stock market, during the late 1990s tech-stock boom, then housing—but the Fed declined to do anything or even admit the bubbles existed. The nation is now stuck with the consequences of its blindness.

The Federal Reserve's dereliction of duty is central to the financial failures. It betrayed the purpose for which the central bank was first created, in 1913, abandoning the sense of balance the Fed had long pursued and that Congress requires. Most politicians, not to mention the press, are too intimidated to question the Fed's daunting power, but their ignorance is about to compound the problem. Instead of demanding answers, the political system is about to expand the Fed's governing powers—despite its failure to protect us. Treasury Secretary Paulson proposed and Democratic leaders have agreed to make the insulated Fed the "supercop" that oversees not only commercial banks and banking conglomerates but also the largest investment houses or anyone else big enough to destabilize the system. This "reform" would definitely reassure club members who are already too cozy with the central bankers. Everyone else would be left deeper in the dark.

The political system, once again, is rewarding failure. The Fed is an unreliable watchdog, ideologically biased and compromised by its conflicting obligations. Is it supposed to discipline the big money players or keep them afloat? Putting the secretive central bank in charge, with its unlimited powers to prop up troubled firms, would further eviscerate democracy, not to mention economic justice.

If Congress enacts this concept early next year, the privileged group of protected financial interests is sure to grow larger, because other nonfinancial firms could devise ways to reconfigure themselves so they too would qualify for club membership. A very large manufacturing conglomerate—General Electric, for instance—might absorb elements of banking in order to be covered by the Fed's umbrella (GE Capital is already among the largest pools of investment capital). Private-equity firms, with their buccaneer style of corporate management, are already trying to buy into banking, with encouragement from the Fed (the Service Employees International Union has mounted a campaign to stop them). A new President could stop the whole deal, of course, but John McCain has surrounded himself with influential advisers who were co-architects of this financial disaster. For that matter, so has Barack Obama.

The nation, meanwhile, is flirting with historic catastrophe. Nobody yet knows how bad it is, but the peril is vastly larger than previous episodes, like the savings and loan bailout of the late 1980s. The dangers are compounded by the fact that the United States is now utterly dependent on foreign creditors—Japan and China lead the list—who have been propping us up with their lending. Thanks to growing trade deficits and debt, foreign portfolio holdings of US long-term debt securities have more than doubled since 1994, from 7.9 percent to 18.8 percent as of June 2007. If these countries get fed up with their losses and pull the plug, the US economy will be a long, long time coming back.

The gravest danger is that the national economy will weaken further and spiral downward into a negative cycle that feeds on itself: as conditions darken, people hunker down and wait for the storm to pass—consumers stop buying, banks stop lending, producing companies cut their workforces. That feeds more defaulted loan losses back into the banking system's balance

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sheets. This vicious cycle is essentially what led to the Great Depression after the stock market crash of 1929. I offer not a prediction but a warning. The comparison may sound far-fetched now, but US policy-makers and politicians are putting us at risk of historic deflationary forces that, once they take hold, are very difficult to reverse.

A more aggressive response from Washington would address the real economy's troubles as seriously as it does Wall Street's. Financial firms have lost capital on a huge scale—more of them will fail or be bought by foreign investors. But Wall Street cannot get well this time if the economy remains stuck in the ditch. Washington needs to revive the "animal spirits" of the nation at large. The $152 billion stimulus package enacted so far is piddling and ought to be three or four times larger. Instead of sending the money to Iraq, we should be spending it here on getting people back to work, building and repairing our tattered infrastructure, investing in worthwhile projects that can help stimulate the economy in rough weather.

An agenda of deeper reforms can boost public confidence even as it undoes a lot of the damage caused by the financiers and bankers. Some suggestions:

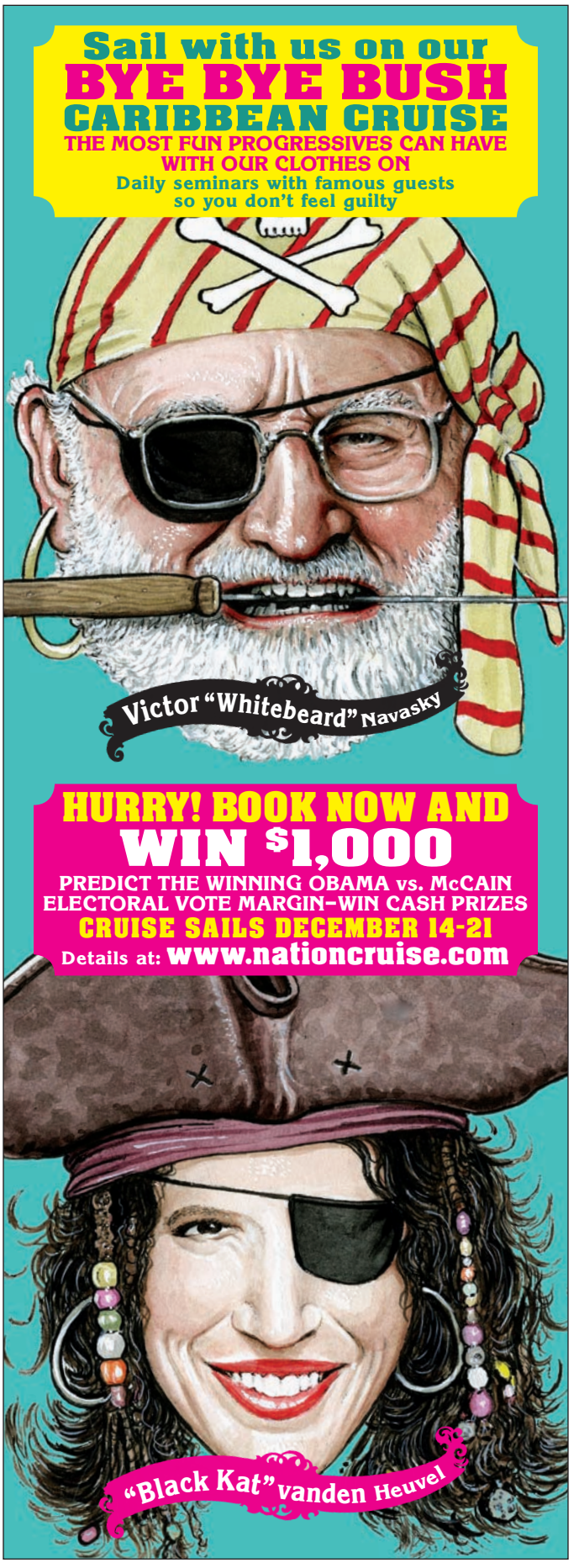
§ Nationalize Fannie Mae and other government-supported enterprises instead of coddling them. Restore them to their original status as nonprofit federal agencies that provide a valuable service to housing and other markets. Make the investors eat their losses. Buy the shares at 2 cents on the dollar. Without a federal guarantee, these firms are doomed anyway.

§ Resolve the democratic contradiction of "too big to fail" bailouts by dismantling the firms that are too big to fail—especially the newly created banking conglomerates that have done so much harm. Restore the boundaries between commercial banking and investment banking. In any case, market pressures are likely to shrink those behemoths as banks sell off their parts to survive. For the remaining big boys, revive antitrust enforcement. Set stern new conditions for emergency lending from government—supervised receivership, stricter lending rules to prevent recidivism and severe penalties for greed-crazed shareholders and executives.

§ Assign the Federal Reserve's regulatory role to a new public agency that is visible and politically accountable. Make the Fed a subsidiary agency of the Treasury Department and reform its decision-making on money and credit to restore an equitable balance between competing goals and interests—seeking full employment but also stable money and moderate inflation.

§ Begin the hard task of re-creating a regulated financial system Americans can trust, one that recognizes its obligations to the broad national interest. This requires regulatory reforms to cover moneypots like private-equity funds and to clear away the blatant conflicts of interest and double-dealing on Wall Street, and also to give responsible shareholders, workers and other interests a greater voice in corporate management and greater protection against rip-offs of personal savings.

§ Re-enact the federal law against usury. The details are difficult and can follow later, but this would be a meaningful first step toward restoring moral obligations in the financial sector. People would understand it, and so would a lot of the money guys. Maybe in the deepening crisis, Washington will begin to grasp that money is also a moral issue. ■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Mad for Rachel Maddow

The Air America host is this election season's breakout star. What's the secret of her success?

by REBECCA TRAISTER

In a year bursting with memorable moments in televised political punditry, the first may have come on January 8, when MSNBC commentator Rachel Maddow explained one of the quick-spreading theories behind Hillary Clinton's victory in New Hampshire, a surprise win that had knocked many of Maddow's on-air colleagues on their asses.

"You want to know who they're blaming for women voters breaking for Hillary Clinton over Barack Obama?" a delighted Maddow asked co-panelist Pat Buchanan and host Chris Matthews, her eyes flashing. "They're blaming Chris Matthews! People are citing specifically Chris…not only for his own views but also as a symbol of what the mainstream media has done to Hillary Clinton."

Matthews sputtered dismissively, but Maddow wasn't done yet. "People feel the media is piling on Hillary Clinton," she said, "and they're coming to her defense with their votes." For Matthews, who'd been enjoying near rapturous pleasure over the presumptive early-season thumping of his personal hobgoblin, there could not have been worse news than that his own commentary might have paved the way for Clinton's triumph. Yet here was just this headline, delivered by Maddow, looking like Sylvester the Cat, practically licking yellow feathers from the corners of her mouth.

"I didn't mean it in a mean way at all," says Maddow over breakfast on a summer day many months and many MSNBC promotions away from that indelible January night. "But I knew that it was just going to blow his mind."

Matthews is far from the first talking head to get this treatment. Long before this primary season, clips of Maddow, an Air America host often invited on cable news shows as a ballsy gremlin of the left, zipped around the Internet. Her specialty was making Tucker Carlson's head explode, or getting under Buchanan's skin until all he could do was gibber at her about socialism. But presidential election cycles provide the hot klieg lights under which character actors mature into media leading ladies, and at 35, with fewer than five years of national broadcast experience under her belt, Rachel Maddow is the explosive star of the season. She's gone from being a popular guest analyst on MSNBC to an exclusive commentator to a regular guest host for the network's prize pig, *Countdown With Keith Olbermann*. Now there is increasing clang and clamor over the possibility that she will get her own show on MSNBC.

What's remarkable about Maddow's ascension is not its velocity—Hurricane Katrina made Anderson Cooper in less than a week—but the shifts in media it may demarcate. Maddow is one of the few left-liberal women to bust open the world of TV punditry, which has made icons of right-wing commentators like Ann Coulter and Michelle Malkin. Unlike her beautiful, bilious conservative female counterparts or the cocksure boys-on-the-bus analysts, however, Maddow didn't get here by bluster and bravado but with a combination of crisp thinking and galumphing good cheer. Remarkably, this season's discovery isn't a glossy matinee idol or a smooth-talking partisan hack but a PhD Rhodes scholar lesbian policy wonk who started as a prison AIDS activist.

VIRGINIA SHERWOOD/NBC NEWSWIRE VIA AP IMAGES

Rachel Maddow reports from the MSNBC newsroom in New York City, January 3.

All of which raises a crucial question: does Maddow's unlikely success, reliant on her ability to defy cliché and categorization at every turn, signal a move in punditry away from the thuggish and the angry and toward the lucid and sophisticated? Or has her powerful charisma and canny career management allowed her to break the rules—without actually breaking a mold?

When we meet, Maddow is halfway through an eight-night stand filling in for a vacationing Olbermann on *Countdown*, and she is vibrating with energy from the previous evening. She believes she has three distinct responsibilities when subbing: not messing anything up for the show's permanent stewards, keeping Olbermann's ratings high and just being Rachel Maddow. "Trying to do it as if I'm Keith isn't the best way to go," she explains.

Maddow fulfilled all three responsibilities in her July stint, showcasing her obvious facility with the medium while putting her own stamp on the program. Nonetheless, she still dwells on her anxieties about the mechanics of hosting—when to look at the camera, when to turn to the script—which she says Olbermann has tutored her on. "It's like rocket science, honestly," she says. "And I feel like I've got a learning curve that's like the Matterhorn! Holy mackerel!"

Rebecca Traister is a senior writer for Salon, *where she covers women in media, politics and entertainment.*

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Of course, Olbermann recently told the *Kansas City Star* that his protégée mastered the technical stuff in about ten minutes, and that on the first night she stepped in for him, she didn't make a single teleprompter mistake, while he averages four or five a night. But Maddow's signature mixture of self-deprecation and gusto, her holy mackerel–ness, is as good a place as any to start thinking about her singular success. Everything about her radiates competence and a deft, bright careerism. She wants to succeed, makes no bones about campaigning for her own television show and yet evinces a regular-person charm and self-doubt that ensures you'll never mistake her ambition for bloodthirst or bullying.

Unlike her Air America founding classmates Janeane Garofalo and Al Franken, Maddow is not a professional comedian. Still, it's clear that she finds many of the characters lumbering across the tableau of American politics a total hoot. She finds her own story pretty hilarious, too. Asked if her television career is the culmination of a plotted path, Maddow laughs. "You mean when I started working on AIDS in prisons, was this where I thought it would end up? Yeah. This is pretty much it. Phase forty-seven of my master plan."

Maddow grew up in the Bay Area; she came out just before college in 1990 and became an AIDS activist at the epicenter of the epidemic. She earned a degree in public policy from Stanford before beginning work with ACT UP and the AIDS Legal Referral Panel. But Maddow had trouble breaking into treatment activism, which was then the rock-star world of AIDS policy. "It was boys' land," she says. "I knew like two women total who were doing treatment activism. And I didn't totally get it. I'm not like Barbie—'Math is hard!'—but it was a techie world, and I didn't feel like I could be all that helpful."

The blogosphere is dotted with posts like 'I'm totally gay for Rachel Maddow,' a meme that appears to transcend gender and sexuality.

What she discovered instead was the nexus of the radical prison reform movement of the '70s and modern AIDS activism. It was an area where Maddow felt progress—like allowing secure hospices to take dying prisoners—was possible. "Dying behind bars?" she says fourteen years later. "Wicked expensive. And wicked stupid. And also mean. So let's make the hospices get what they want and also do the right thing!"

In 1995 Maddow traveled as a Rhodes scholar to Oxford, where she began a doctorate in political science, focusing on the intersection of the AIDS and prison movements. She moved back to the United States to finish her dissertation, crashing with friends in Western Massachusetts. "I wanted to live somewhere where I'd be unhappy," she explains. "And I have no interest in New England, hate winter, don't like the country, not fond of animals." More than a decade later, Maddow still divides her time between her home in Northampton, Massachusetts, and an apartment in Greenwich Village, both of which she shares with her girlfriend, artist Susan Mikula. The couple have been together for almost ten years, and Maddow calls their relationship "my proudest accomplishment."

After defending her dissertation, Maddow picked up work on AIDS in prison again, as well as a series of odd jobs, from cleaning buckets at a coffee bean factory to being a handyman who didn't know how to fix anything. As part of her patchwork career, she attended an open audition to replace the "news girl" at the local radio station. She got the job and took a shine to the airwaves. When Air America launched in 2004, Maddow lobbied the network to bring her aboard. It did, hiring her to cohost *Unfiltered* with Chuck D and Lizz Winstead. When the show was canceled a year later, Maddow got her own two-hour weekday slot. "They had no business hiring me," Maddow says of the flier Air America took on her. "As it turned out, it worked out for them. I mean, I hope it did. I hope they're happy!"

Maddow is one of the only original Air Americans to be left standing after the company's rocky four-and-a-half-year history, and her mainstream success is an unqualified victory for the network. If she got plucked away by grabby television hands, it would be a tough loss. "We view her as a homegrown talent," says Air America chairman Charles Kireker, who has run the network since February. "We hope and expect to have her continue hosting a radio show on Air America for a long time."

In an e-mail, Maddow confirms her desire to host both a TV and a radio program: "If O'Reilly, Hannity and Beck can do that, so can I." Still, Kireker has reason to be nervous. Calling from the Netroots convention in Austin, he'd just come from a panel during which mention of a still-imaginary Maddow TV show prompted an eruption of applause. "We've seen the potential for greatness in Rachel for years," says Kireker. "What's so remarkable is that now it's coming so quickly. This election cycle has propelled it forward in a meteoric fashion."

No kidding. Love is too weak a word to describe how some people feel about Rachel Maddow. They lurve her, loave her, luff her. *New York* magazine's online Intelligencer column recently ran an item headlined Why We're Gay for Rachel Maddow, and the blogosphere is dotted with posts like "I'm totally gay for Rachel Maddow." The "gay for Rachel" meme appears to transcend gender and sexuality. Women, men, straight and not straight: they're all gay for her. In a year in which we have decided to become postracial and postgender, Maddow may embody a media in which adoring fandom is postgay.

That's appropriate, since part of the hypnotic hold Maddow has on her audience is that while she is one of the first fully forged stars of the "liberal media," her commentary is, in a funny way, also postpartisan. During an incendiary primary season, Maddow maintained an almost maddening equilibrium, expressing dismay and appreciation for just about every candidate. She was very hard on Clinton; her face still hardens when she talks about the 3 AM red phone ad, which she calls "an abomination," and Clinton's war vote, which she says is "unforgivable." But Maddow also finds herself "frequently underwhelmed" by Obama. "He got it right in opposing the war," she says, "but his war policy stuff now is bullshit. It's total bullshit, and I've never been impressed by it. One or two brigades a month? You want your son to be in the last brigade?"

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Contrary to widely held opinion, Maddow did not endorse a candidate in the primary. "I have never and still don't think of myself as an Obama supporter, either professionally or actually," says Maddow, adding that she feels "liberated by having a professional role in which it's probably better for me not to take sides."

"She is a civics geek," says Vanessa Silverton-Peel, executive producer of *The Rachel Maddow Show*. "She wants to talk about AIDS in prison and the Constitution and the war in Iraq. Policy is her main focus. Not winning elections."

On radio, Maddow starts every day with war news. She focuses hard on policy and on the politics of the absurd. "I'm fascinated by the evil child actor twins that run Poland," she says, as well as inflation in Zimbabwe ("How many bails of hundred-dollar bills does it take to buy bread today in Zimbabwe?"). She's obsessed with the Iraqi national soccer team, librarians and cocktail mixology; she once said that she'd like to "professionally bully people about what they drink." Then there are her specialties: foreign policy, the GI Bill, veterans groups. "That's the most satisfying thing about being able to do my own story selection," she says. "You get to pick that stuff. And whoever is President or in control in Congress is not going to affect that."

It's ironic that Maddow, perhaps Air America's most successful product, has traveled through the looking glass of partisan journalism and come out the other side an electoral agnostic, a liberal in the purest, almost mineral sense of the word. She loves the country, loves the Constitution and loves what is moving about politics. A worldview shaped by these concerns, one that maintains a well-manicured distance from electoral *Sturm und Drang*, could be a powerful asset for Maddow and the rest of the left-leaning media, an inoculation against future tune-out should they get their wish—an Obama administration that could rob them of their fury-fueled audiences.

Maddow, who has not owned a TV since 1990, tries to limit her exposure to online and print criticism of herself. If and when she lands her own berth, and with it a nightly viewership unused to seeing a brainy lesbian with rock-solid expertise on military policy or the IAVA, that will become more difficult. She already bristles slightly when talking about how she gets all the girl questions. "I love the idea that I am the voice of woman," she says, gesturing at her T-shirt, baggy jeans and Red Sox cap. "Look at me. It's like: really? The one woman in the room is really mannish." In real life, as advertised on her website, Maddow dresses "like a first-grader" and hypothesizes that her mild androgyny might have greased her infiltration of boyworld punditry. "I look like a dude," she says. Of course, for her television gigs, Maddow gets coiffed and painted and dressed up in what she calls "lady clothes" to fit a more traditional bill, a process she says she used to "resist and get angsty about," but to which she has now surrendered.

When I ask whether some of her signature habits—the fascination with the evil twin Polish dictators, the obsession with the nuts and bolts of foreign policy—will go the way of her chunky glasses and naked lips, she balks. "The only reason I get these opportunities is because of my sensibility," she says. "I'm not being invited to do these things because of my looks or my facility with language. What they're after is the thing you're saying I have to trade off."

She continues, "My instinct sometimes is to trade it off. Like, 'Oh, I'm in the big leagues now so I better dial it back. But they don't want it dialed back. They are booking me or asking me to host because they like what they see." ■

Letters

(continued from page 2)

Wiener Replies

Irvine, Calif.

The issue is not whether there is anti-Semitic speech at UCI (and elsewhere)—my article described what's been said at MSU events in lurid detail. The issue is what the ZOA and its allies want to do about it. They now say the solution is for Jewish students to withdraw from UCI because the campus administration, and the Bush Administration, have failed to protect them. Morton Klein and Susan Tuchman's problem here is not just with me—it's with Hillel, the Anti-Defamation League, the American Jewish Committee and the local Jewish Federation, which disagree with that solution, as do the leaders of the four major Jewish student groups on campus.

The ZOA exaggerates the danger to Jewish students—that's what the Bush Administration Office of Civil Rights (OCR) suggested in its investigation of the ZOA's complaint. Maybe the ZOA knows about lots of stone-throwing incidents on campus, but its formal complaint to the OCR listed one stone thrown at one Jew—four years ago. Maybe it knows about lots of swastikas, but its complaint listed only one—in a toilet stall, with the words "Bitch Ass Asians" written underneath. I humbly suggested we did not need to make a federal case out of this.

As for Chancellor Drake, he has condemned anti-Semitism often, but the ZOA wants him to condemn particular statements made on campus by particular Muslim speakers. Does that mean he should also condemn the Christian fundamentalist yelling at students that they are going to hell? What about David Horowitz's recent speech? I don't want the chancellor monitoring the content of campus speech (and neither does the ACLU). Those who disagree with the MSU should say so, loudly and clearly—and they have. Universities ought to be defenders of freedom of speech, which means tolerating speech that is objectionable. That's hardly an original idea, but it's still a good one.

Jon Wiener

Come Home, Hillary Fans, All Is Forgiven

Brookfield, Wis.

How depressing to read the letter from Susan Kotar and Joan Gessler, who plan to vote for John McCain if Hillary is not Obama's vice presidential choice ["Letters," July 21/28]. Is Obama to pay for the sins of any man who may have discriminated against these two? Should women suffer through a McCain presidency and Supreme Court appointees because some voters cannot handle the fact that Hillary lost? Move on, ladies! Think with your heads and vote for the one who can make a difference in the lives of women—Obama. He's not my perfect candidate either, but for the sake of my daughters and millions of others, I ask you to do the same.

Anne Chiu

Correction

In the August 4/11 "Noted," L.F. Eason III's first name was incorrect.

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Books & the Arts.

What Lies Beneath

by ADINA HOFFMAN

KEVIN FRAYER/AP PHOTO

The view of the Siloam Pool in Silwan in 2004. Jesus is said to have used the pool's water to restore a blind man's sight.

Something of the street punk and village elder mingle in Jawad Siyam. Wiry, dark and stubble-chinned, with a cigarette often dangling from the side of his mouth and a slightly amused look in his eye, he bears more than a passing resemblance to Jean-Paul Belmondo—if, that is, one can imagine the star of *Breathless* as a Palestinian community organizer who speaks five languages fluently, is married to a Bosnian Serb, has two small children, and is waging a possibly last-ditch struggle to save his village from destruction.

Born a year after the 1967 annexation of that village, Silwan, to Israel, Siyam, the seventh of nine children, literally grew up with the occupation and at the same time saw Silwan evolve from a sleepy rural enclave to a teeming urban slum—now one of the poorest and most troubled in East Jerusalem. For Siyam's entire life, the people of Silwan have been considered "residents," not citizens, of Israel, which is to say that they pay their municipal taxes and get very little in return: they cannot vote in national elections; they have no local high school, no post office and no public parks. Some homes aren't even hooked up to the sewage system or electrical grid. But for all that hardship, Siyam's childhood was, to hear him tell it, somehow simple—almost pastoral. When he was little, his peasant grandmother picked vegetables from her garden and sold them in the market, and his family lived in large part off their land, harvesting olives and lemons from their trees, raising sheep and chickens.

Like his older brothers, Siyam began to work at an early age, washing cars and peddling popsicles and cold drinks to the tourists—both Jewish and Arab—who came to the nearby Old City and to Silwan, which contains the most ancient parts of Jerusalem. II Samuel says the area was once the city of David, the king. In the Gospel of John, it is here, in Siloam, that Jesus, devising a miracle cure made of spittle-mixed clay and water from the village pool, makes a blind man see.

Silwan spills down along the southern slope just beneath the Al-Aqsa Mosque and Wailing Wall, and as Jawad Siyam remembers his childhood, the villagers lived comfortably with—if not in precise scholarly awareness of—the multiple layers of history and culture around them, whether Canaanite, Jewish, Persian, Hellenistic, Roman, Byzantine, Islamic, Crusader or Ottoman. The ancient tombs and terraces were their very own stony backyard. Stories were told of how, during the fighting in '67, people hid in secret networks of tunnels underneath the village.

Despite the hush that often attended such tales—as though it was buried treasure being whispered about and not what are probably 2,000-year-old waterways—the Silwanis saw the antiquities as part of their past, and they welcomed the Jewish archaeologists who came to excavate there in the late 1970s. Many of the villagers were employed on that dig, as they had been on others since the

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Adina Hoffman is the author of House of Windows: Portraits from a Jerusalem Neighborhood. *She has just completed* My Happiness Bears No Relation to Happiness: A Poet's Life in the Palestinian Century, *forthcoming from Yale. One of the founders and editors of Ibis Editions, she lives in Jerusalem.*

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nineteenth century. "It wasn't political," Siyam insists. "It was work." When violent protests broke out around the site then, the demonstrators were ultra-Orthodox Jews who objected vehemently to the possible desecration of Jewish graves. The Palestinians of Silwan, for their part, were basically glad for the digging.

Those days are, alas, also part of ancient history. By now excavation in Silwan has become synonymous with a particularly aggressive campaign to expel Siyam and his neighbors from their homes and install in their place a die-hard cadre of flag-waving, gun-toting Israelis: since 1991, the first time a local Palestinian was evicted from his house to make way for settlers, a small group of Jewish families has planted itself in the midst of tens of thousands of Palestinian Silwanis, and all signs indicate that this is just the beginning. While Silwan's archaeological riches used to be a source of pride for the villagers, the presence of those same subterranean strata now seem to represent for them a nearly existential threat: To Dig a Tunnel Means to Kill a Village, reads the Arabic and English banner slung over the entrance to the protest tent where the local men spend many of their evenings, under the constant surveillance of several settler-owned security cameras.

Elad's presence in Silwan has turned the town's archaeological riches into an existential threat.

How could a tunnel kill a village?

Or, to put it in slightly different terms: "*Do you vant to know how it all began?*" So booms the grinning, paunchy Israeli actor in the fedora and safari vest who narrates the 3-D movie on regular view at the City of David visitors' center, the national park run by the settler organization Elad (a Hebrew acronym for "To the City of David"), smack dab in the crowded midst of Palestinian Silwan. Plumes of sacrificial smoke rise and celestial choirs coo relentlessly throughout this kitsch extravaganza—equal parts Cecil B. DeMille and Lara Croft Tomb Raider video game—whose state-of-the-art digital animation swoops like a messianically minded combat pilot around the comic-book walls and cartoon valleys of the city "as it was" 3,000 years ago.

In fact, it may be more accurate to date this particular story of origins back a mere two and a half decades or so, to the arrival in Silwan of "an undercover commander of an elite military unit," David Be'eri, who would found Elad a few years later, in 1986. This, according to Elad's lavish website, which, using Be'eri's nickname, explains that when "David'le first visited the City of David…[it] was in such a state of disrepair and neglect that the former excavations that had once been conducted were once again concealed beneath garbage and waste.… Inspired by the historical record of archeological discoveries made in the City of David in prior years, and by the longing of the Jewish People to return to Zion, David'le left the army to establish [Elad]." While the website does not put it quite so bluntly, Be'eri's real mission was to erase the Palestinian village of Silwan and replace it with the Jewish City of David'le.

Elad has since made serious strides toward that end. Funded by the likes of Miami bingo king Irving Moskowitz and, it appears, several well-known Russian tycoons, the group has refused to divulge the names of most of its donors, though according to Israel's Registrar of Non-Profit Organizations, in 2005 alone it took in $7 million. (A report last year in *Ha'aretz* said the Registrar was "considering demanding the dissolution of Elad" as a result of the group's unwillingness to disclose the names of its patrons.) Such secrecy and lack of transparency on all fronts seem part of Elad's strategy—designed to make it very difficult for those on the outside to figure out exactly what is going on. This much, though, is clear: Elad has bought, finagled and stolen Palestinian homes in the neighborhood—sometimes forging documents and paying off local collaborators to substantiate the fraud, other times bullying impoverished Palestinian homeowners to sell with threats and huge quantities of cash. Occasionally, they've forced their way back into homes that, in the late nineteenth century, housed a small group of Yemenite Jews; more often they've made clever use of Israel's Absentee Property Law, which allows the state to expropriate Palestinian land whose owners live in the West Bank or abroad.

In the early 1990s the state transferred all the land in that category to the Jewish National Fund, which in turn leased the Silwan properties to Elad—without proffering a tender or following any of the usual legal procedures. And this despite the fact that Elad has never attempted to hide its politics or plans for what it coyly calls "residential revitalization." As one of its spokesmen put it more directly to a reporter in 2006, the goal is "to get a [Jewish] foothold in East Jerusalem and to create an irreversible situation in the holy basin around the Old City."

Most clever of all was Elad's decision to fix on archaeology as the key to winning the hearts and minds of the wider Israeli Jewish public. Archaeology has, of course, long been something like Israel's national pastime, a "scientific" discipline that, in this particular cultural context, has often blurred into the realm of major-motion-picture-scale mythmaking (see under: Masada). Since the early days of the state, archaeology has provided vivid settings and props that have helped Israelis both secular and religious to dramatize the stories they like to tell themselves about their historic bond to the modern homeland.

Elad's use of archaeology may be entirely cynical, driven more by the desire to establish ethnic facts on the ground than to explore what lies below ground: settlers are quick, after all, to pour foundations and erect fortresslike homes right over the relics they declare so precious to the Jewish people. Their scheme has, however, worked like a charm. After a bit of legal wrangling in 1998, the Israel Nature and Parks Authority and the Jerusalem municipality relinquished to Elad the management of the area around the Old City walls, including the City of David archaeological park, providing the fringe group with major revenues and mainstream legitimization. Elad, in turn, hired the cash-strapped Israel Antiquities Authority to excavate the area on its behalf—funding and tightly controlling all the digging that takes place there. By various means, Elad has over the course of the past several years also managed to seize hold of many of the public spaces in Silwan—tree-filled plots and small patches of green that used to be open to the residents and have now been fenced, locked and deemed archaeological sites, off-limits to the villagers. (Again, settler home-building on the same sites often follows.)

Not surprisingly, the discoveries that have since turned up have hewed to an unabashedly selective Jewish story of this place through which so many civilizations have passed over the centuries: a few years back, for instance, Eilat Mazar, one of the archaeologists in Elad's employ (and that of the Shalem Center, a conservative Jerusalem think tank), uncovered a substantial set of ancient stone walls that she claims—despite a glaring lack of physical evidence—belong to King David's very own palace. More recently, Elad's workers have been digging under the homes of the Palestinian resi-

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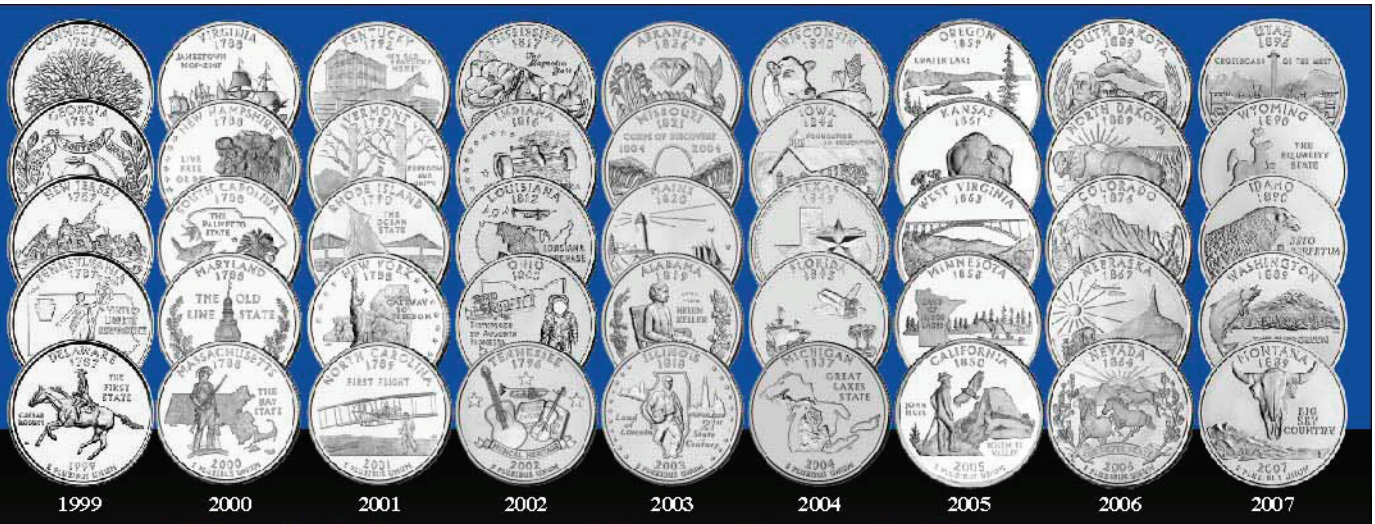

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dents—clearing out by hand a drainage channel that Elad-sponsored archaeologists assert leads from the Temple Mount and was used as an escape route by Jews fleeing the city's Roman conquerors in 70 CE. Further down the slope, they seem to be carving a gallery that will one day link the historical pool of Siloam to the Temple Mount excavations. And right beside the northernmost homes in the village gapes a huge excavation trench supported by massive concrete walls, where heavy machinery and large teams of diggers are trying to reach bedrock, some forty feet below the surface.

Meanwhile, large, ominous cracks have begun to appear in the walls of Palestinians' homes in Silwan. When Jawad Siyam and several of his relatives and neighbors filed a petition with the Israel Supreme Court in a bid to end this destructive digging, he and all the other law-abiding not-quite-citizens who signed the petition were promptly thrown into prison or placed under house arrest—faced with trumped-up charges of having disturbed the peace and damaged property. Though those arrested were released after a night in jail, and a temporary injunction halting the digging was eventually issued by the court (a final decision on the matter is pending), the message was clear: dare complain to the authorities and your life will be hell. It is striking that every person who signed the petition was immediately imprisoned—some of them roused from their beds before dawn. Since then, all the signatories have been repeatedly questioned, warned and generally harassed by the police and Shin Bet, the Israeli security service.

However outrageous these actions may be, the takeover of such a charged area by a militantly right-wing organization like Elad seems to bother very few Israelis. Just last year, some 350,000 tourists of all kinds traipsed through—and paid entry fees to—Elad's City of David national park, where the glossy brochures tell a story that breaks off abruptly some 1,938 years ago, with the destruction of the Second Temple, and picks up again with the late-nineteenth-century arrival in town of the British surveyor Charles Warren and that small group of Yemenite Jews. (The Palestinian Arab residents of Silwan, past and present, are entirely absent from this version of events.) Some of these park visitors are, one assumes, unaware of the control the settlers exert over the site; others know and do not care. Better belligerent Jews with guns nearby than belligerent Arabs with grudges—or so the logic goes. Even the ostensibly dovish *Ha'aretz* reporter Danny Rubinstein saw no shame in closing an op-ed piece critical of Elad's settlement plans by asking rhetorically, "But who can remain unmoved by the important addition to the study of Jerusalem's past that is now being revealed by the City of David digs?"

Tel Aviv University professor of archaeology Rafi Greenberg, for one, can. As he leads the alternative archaeological tours that he and a small group of like-minded Israeli colleagues have begun to conduct around Silwan and the City of David site—in a modest but concerted effort to counter the grossly skewed version put forth by Elad and the archaeologists on its payroll—his voice has a slightly weary edge, though it is a weariness shot through with a note of anger that seems almost, in this landscape, prophetic. As someone who first came to this site as a student volunteer in 1978 and stayed on as a staff member until 1982, meeting his wife-to-be amid the trowels and buckets (this was the same dig, sponsored by the Hebrew University, that Jawad Siyam remembers from his childhood), Greenberg is also deeply connected to this place, as he is deeply troubled by what is happening—to Silwan, to Israel, to his profession.

> The digs in Silwan have been conducted in haste in a race to get to 'Jewish' bedrock.

"We're not educated to be reflexive at all in archaeology," he explains, one on one, after a tour of Silwan, both above and below ground. "I was brought up as an archaeologist, making a complete hermetic distinction between science and everyday life. I was always politically active, but I never thought [politics] had any relation to scientific work."

Gradually, Greenberg began to see that such distinctions weren't possible, and to understand that digging responsibly—and ethically—meant paying attention to the lives of those above ground and to the ways in which the excavations would affect them. To foreign ears, this may sound like mere common sense, but in the fraught Israeli context, it's anything but that. (Sometimes that context extends well beyond the physical borders of the Jewish state, as was the case with the recent uproar surrounding the tenure case of Barnard anthropologist Nadia Abu El-Haj, who writes critically of Israeli archaeology and what she terms "territorial self-fashioning.") Greenberg and the handful of others who are involved in the alternative tours—which are conducted in Hebrew and English and include a thorough archaeological overview of the site as well as a short stop at the protest tent to hear the stories of several Silwan residents—are considered by other Israeli archaeologists to be playing with fire; their work in Silwan is seen as "political." Translation: to identify with the plight of Palestinians whose daily lives are being turned upside down in the name of biblical archaeology is "political." To take huge amounts of money from and lend a professional seal of approval to the highly dubious digging of a fanatical settler organization whose stated goal is the ethnic cleansing of one of the most sensitive pieces of real estate in the Middle East is not political.

"My interpretation," says Greenberg, "is that archaeologists are naïve children in their political perception.... They just don't want to know. They want to dig in the ground, get their hands dirty, find nice stuff, and it really is too great a mental exertion to think about what the impact is of what [they're] doing on society."

So forget society, I say to him. What, at least, of professional norms? As Greenberg had explained during the tour, the digs in Silwan are being conducted in the most tendentious way—with bulldozers clearing huge areas in haste and multiple levels being dismantled in a race to get to "Jewish" bedrock. Settlers build houses right on top of relics, and extremely tenuous conclusions are being drawn on the basis of nationalist ideology and a literalist reading of biblical texts, not the actual shards and stones that turn up in the course of the digging. Historical cross sections aren't being preserved. Instead of the usual timetable for a dig—with one season of excavation followed by months in the lab—the City of David excavations are taking place year-round, straining professional standards and leaving no time for careful analysis.

It is, says Greenberg, "bad science"; he believes other Israeli archaeologists aren't happy about this side of things, just as they are probably displeased with the involvement of Elad in the digs. In 1992, under the Rabin government, a state committee of inquiry issued a strongly worded report about the activities of settler organizations in East Jerusalem and singled out Elad's actions in Silwan for reprimand; several years later a suit was brought against Elad for willfully damaging antiquities and ignoring court orders. In 1998 a group of archaeologists from the Hebrew University petitioned the Supreme Court, protesting the involvement of a private group like Elad in manag-

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ing the site; the petition was withdrawn after the authorities promised to issue a tender. Meanwhile, Elad has only tightened its grip on Silwan since these various decisions came down, and the vast majority of Israel's archaeologists (including the signatories to the 1998 court petition) have during that time fallen silent. Greenberg chalks up this absence of protest to the same mistrust among local archaeologists of the "political" and to what he calls the "general despair" that has swept over much of Israeli society in the past decade, the sense that the battle against extremism—be it cultural or political—is already lost.

But fatigue is not much of an excuse in a situation so dire. Neither are labored declarations of professional objectivity like the one made this spring by Shuka Dorfman, director of the Israel Antiquities Authority, who proclaimed (in a slightly different but related context), "The minute you say that Jerusalem is occupied territory, that is political.... I am forbidden from making political calculations. I do purely professional work. We have to leave these matters to the decision-makers. Archaeology does not belong to the archaeologists." Then who, one wonders, does it belong to? And if not now, then when does such "pure professional" work give way to outright complicity in something as obviously awful as the expulsion of innocent people from their homes?

Several of Greenberg's Tel Aviv University colleagues recently published an article in a professional journal, refuting in firm if dryly technical terms the notion that the stones unearthed at the City of David site are part of King David's palace. Yet while it is clear from the article that the authors strongly disapprove of the methods being used by Elad's archaeologists, they seem unwilling to stand up and call for the taxpayer-funded Israel Antiquities Authority (and the Hebrew University, under whose auspices this dig is also being carried out) to cut off support for such shoddy work. Needless to say, their critique is all a strict matter of Chalcolithic shards, cup marks and Iron II dating; the name Elad isn't mentioned once, just as the larger social implications of the dig are completely avoided.

Given this rigidly old-school state of archaeological affairs, Greenberg and the others involved in the alternative tours have plainly taken a professional risk by speaking out—though they are quite humble and businesslike about it. Listening to them talk, it seems they simply felt that this was the correct—and in fact the only—thing to do. And while they're engaged in a struggle to help Jawad Siyam and his neighbors save their homes, the honor of their own profession as it's practiced locally is also at stake here. Yonathan Mizrachi, another archaeologist who organizes and leads the tours, told me he wants to present archaeology in a different light. He has a vision of how a site like the one in Silwan could actually be used to teach tolerance: "When you look at all these cultures together [in the ground], they're less threatening, you say, OK, there were a hundred cultures here, so another one lives right next to us."

Greenberg, for his part, takes a slightly darker view of his profession's potential. "Generally speaking," he says, "I don't think archaeology is important enough to create conflict over. In other words, if archaeology is going to lead people into direct conflict that can lead to bloodshed, it's not worth it. I prefer to cover up the site and wait for better times. If they ever come."

And yet, for all the uncertainty and even gloom that hovers over Silwan's future—just a few weeks ago, the Jerusalem municipality decided unilaterally to swap the longstanding, Arabic names of various central streets in Silwan with biblically loaded Hebrew ones, and so, overnight, Wadi Hilweh Street morphed into City of David Heights Street—something fresh and newly upbeat is also afoot in the village. This is partly a function of the heightened attention brought by the alternative tours and a flurry of reports in the local media, as well as by the legal steps that are being taken to try to stop the settlers. In July a lower court ruled that the municipality could not expropriate nine privately held open plots from their Palestinian owners; the city had wanted to create parking lots for tourists on the land. The situation in the village has also gained a certain international notoriety, as a petition against Elad's involvement in Silwan has been signed by a host of distinguished scholars worldwide and continues to circulate, calling on the Israeli authorities to "put an end at once to this blatant perversion and dangerous politicization of an academic field of endeavor."

Perhaps more important, though, a new sort of awareness—and sense of the urgent need to act—has begun to evolve among the Silwan villagers themselves. This has been happening for some time now, and it both is and isn't related to Elad and its bulldozers.

Several years ago, Jawad Siyam started a small community center in the heart of Wadi Hilweh, his own neighborhood and the most immediately endangered part of Silwan. Siyam has a keen social consciousness shaped by years of political engagement: when he was 14 he began to participate in strikes at school and to read Che Guevara and the

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Palestinian novelist and PFLP spokesman Ghassan Kanafani. Then came the lessons of the first intifada and several years spent abroad—during which he earned a degree in American studies in Ankara and another in communications and social work in Berlin. Long before he began to work for various progressive European NGOs in Jerusalem, he had come to the conclusion that nonviolence was the only hope for the Palestinians: "Once my brother told me," he says, "throwing stones is easy, but to carry a pen is very difficult. Throwing stones—that's what the occupation wants us to do. But if all we do is throw stones for ten, twenty years, then what will we have?" His center is designed, in part, to provide the people of Silwan with an alternative to stones: there the children study art and music (an energetic young couple—she is Dutch, he is Israeli—teach guitar, singing and basic music appreciation to the apparent delight of the kids who crowd into the small classroom once a week); some of the local women attend English and Hebrew classes, and for several months they organized an informal cooking group, which has given way to plans for a cookbook and a new project: a traditional embroidery workshop. The teenagers meet to get help with their homework at the center, and a small library is beginning to take shape there. This summer marks the fourth year that a free, volunteer-run day camp is being held in the village.

Just as important as the activities that it sponsors, the center is meant, says Siyam, to provide a place for the people of Silwan to come together. Poverty, the Israeli occupation and the choking proximity of the settlers have wreaked havoc on the social fabric of the village, where collaboration with the intelligence services has become commonplace and the residents, according to Siyam, "don't know each other. They hate each other. They suspect each other." The idea of the center is to offer "a place for everyone, where everyone can meet, a place where children can feel themselves human beings."

He admits that it may be too late to stop the settlers from taking over Silwan, but he also insists that blocking their expansion is not the only goal here. What matters most to him is what he calls "social justice" and his desire to make the people of Wadi Hilweh feel that they've done all they can to protect their homes, their lives, their dignity.

The center is part of that idea, as is the protest tent, where—to judge from the intense pressure the police and Shin Bet are exerting on the local activists—the simple fact of the Wadi Hilweh men sitting down together for a cup of coffee is viewed as threatening by Elad and the authorities, who would much prefer a divided and conquered village. So it is that Jawad Siyam and his brothers, cousins and neighbors have decided to meet brutality with normalcy, constructing their protest tent as a living room turned inside out and opened to the elements. Plastic chairs are scattered all around; a battered refrigerator, a TV set and a lumpy mattress have been dragged in to give the place the feeling of home. In the evenings, the men come here to play cards. When they can, some of the Wadi Hilweh women venture out of their homes and arrive at the tent at a designated time, their heads covered, voices lowered, to sit and talk about their worries and hopes. This past winter, the village children crowded under the flaps to see the first appearance ever by a circus in Silwan.

Jawad's own small son and daughter are too young to understand what is happening with the settlers, but they like to come pat the skinny white horse that's tethered next to the olive saplings the villagers have planted around the tent. Gulping water from a rubber barrel, flicking its tail to keep off the flies, the thirsty mare lends this embattled patch of land an odd semblance of peace. ■

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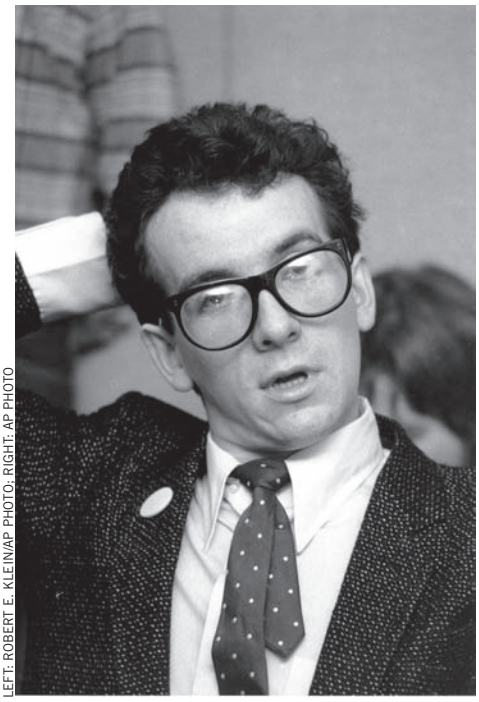

LEFT: ROBERT E. KLEIN/AP PHOTO; RIGHT: AP PHOTO

It's so funny to be seeing you after so long, boy: Elvis Costello in 1979 and 2005.

Love and Unhappiness

by DAVID YAFFE

"I want to bite the hand that feeds me/I want to bite that hand so badly/I want to make them wish they'd never seen me." Against a backbeat of pulsating bass and tremulous keyboards, Elvis Costello first sneered these lines thirty years ago on "Radio, Radio," the caustic finale of the raucous second side of *This Year's Model*, his major-label debut. The album has recently been given another lavish reissue treatment, this time by Universal (the previous two were by Rykodisc and Rhino), and with each reissue, complete with new liner notes and bonus tracks, Costello racks up yet another sale of the back catalog. Yet no matter how many times he's repackaged, the Elvis Costello of the late '70s will not become harmless. Those songs still have legs—along with teeth. Here's a couplet from "The Beat": "I don't wanna be your lover/I just wanna be your victim." Ouch. Elvis is this year's model yet again.

The bite of Costello's music has always been as keen as his musical appetite. He knows his Schubert *Lieder*, his Miles and Coltrane albums, his Mozart and Wagner operas, and his Ethiopian '70s pop so extensively that he could be rock 'n' roll's most prodigious aesthete, or at least archivist. The B-side covers of "My Funny Valentine" and "Gloomy Sunday" were early hints of his curatorial passion. But since he didn't earn the title of angry young man for nothing, we know that he's not shy about sharing his hatreds as well as his passions, and anyone familiar with his musical objects of enmity would be perplexed by his current role as the opening act for the Police during their North American stadium and arena tour. When Costello listed his 500 favorite CDs for *Vanity Fair* in November 2000, he made a point of noting whose music was absent: "You will see that some very famous names are missing completely. There is nothing at all by Led Zeppelin, the Doors, Michael Jackson, or Sting. You may love them. They just don't do it for me." Three years later, when the Police and Elvis Costello and the Attractions were inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, Costello was asked his opinion of the Police's performance: "They were bloody dreadful."

When Costello performed "Radio, Radio" to a gathering horde of Police fans in Buffalo's HSBC Arena on May 3, he sang the line about biting the hand that feeds him with conviction. He was hitting the same notes as his younger self, but he made no attempt to imitate them. What had been, in its genesis, adenoidal and guttural became steely, reserved, bellowing and a bit resigned. Three decades later, radio—really the music business—is still in the hands of such a lot of fools. It was just another day at the office: Costello sounded pissed off, as if he were a deskbound drone with a wanker for a boss.

The megastars performed a glitzy nostalgia show, bouncing with professional efficiency through a two-hour set that included pretty much every crowd-pleasing tune one would expect from an arena show with a three-figure ticket price. It began with Sting playing "Bring on the Night" an octave down from its original recording, with some fancy guitar picking and a mysterious offstage voice providing harmony—not quite Ashlee Simpson territory, but a little unsettling. Every conceivable hit followed, and their signature refrains—"sending out an SOS," "de doo doo doo, de da da da," "so lonely," "put on the red light"—were hammered into the crowd with a mind-numbing repetition stretched out by the band's inimitable, relentless white-guy ska grooves. The trio performed "Invisible Sun" against a backdrop of manipulative images of starving Third World children. (OK, proceeds from special VIP tickets went to the microfinance organization Unitus.) Sting also shook his 56-year-old ass at the suburban moms in the crowd, who went wild. This from a guy who recently topped the classical music charts with *Songs From the Labyrinth*, his performances of the late-sixteenth- and early-seventeenth-century lutenist and lyricist John Dowland. He has now found himself mining a more contemporary (and remunerative) nostalgia beat. Back in 1982, Costello summed up this mix of charity and vanity on "Town Cryer": "Other boys use the splendor of their trembling lip/They're so teddy bear tender and tragically hip."

Costello made way for the heritage act after playing an hourlong set. He showed off his octaves and vocal stamina while reminding the audience that he was, as usual, in creative overdrive. Backed by the Imposters (two-thirds of the original Attractions, with Davey Faragher filling in on bass for the exiled Bruce Thomas), Costello mixed up songs from the recently released *Momofuku*, his twenty-eighth album, with old hits, including a slightly funked-up "Every Day I Write the Book," a blistering "I Don't Want to Go to Chelsea" (or was it Buffalo?), an anthemic, irony-free run through Nick Lowe's "(What's So Funny 'Bout) Peace Love and Understanding?" (which could have been dedicated to John McCain) and "Alison," with Costello crooning mellifluously and somewhat bitterly for the girl who

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David Yaffe is the author of Fascinating Rhythm: Reading Jazz in American Writing *(Princeton). This fall, he will join the faculty at Claremont McKenna College as the Gould Faculty Fellow in the Humanities.*

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got away. Steve Nieve's rococo keyboard lines were fancy enough for a Royal Conservatory dropout and gritty enough for rock 'n' roll; drummer Pete Thomas was steady as ever; newcomer Faragher had done his homework and held his own with melodic support. OK, so the band banged out the obligatory sex, drugs and masturbation anthem "Pump It Up" for the zillionth time. Everyone has to make a living.

For those of us who have kept up with Costello, with each new release or tour we look for yet another genre plundered, signs of cracks in yet another relationship. And whether Costello is singing original chamber compositions with the Brodsky Quartet, performing his own vocalese renditions of Charles Mingus compositions with the Mingus Big Band or churning out rock 'n' roll with the Imposters, he gives us a place to find parts of ourselves in his seemingly endless catalog of beauty and bile. How many of us, in our brutal youth, dreamed of singing, say, "I Want You," "Party Girl" or a number of other rejection gestalts to a deserving target? In 1977 the 22-year-old Elvis claimed that his emotions did not range beyond "revenge and guilt," and the pairing stuck as a kind of objective correlative for songs like "Lipstick Vogue," "You Belong to Me," "Accidents Will Happen" and, well, almost everything else he recorded at the time. He wanted to call his third album *Emotional Fascism*, which could be yet another Costello Category, a state that many listeners found addictive. (The record's final title, *Armed Forces*, got the point across well enough.) By 1982, on *Imperial Bedroom*, he gave us a metaphysical conceit, a pairing of opposites that, at the time, seemed inseparable and that could also be a skeleton key to his work: "Love and unhappiness go arm and arm/Long-suffering friends of your fatal charm." Costello is a meticulous craftsman who also clearly has, for lack of a better term, issues.

With *Momofuku*, the issues are of a more esoteric sort. Named after the recently deceased inventor of the ramen noodle, the album is the audio equivalent of just adding boiled water. *Momofuku* was quickly inspired last February when Rilo Kiley's Jenny Lewis invited Costello to sing on her solo album. During Lewis's recording sessions, one thing led to another, and Costello suddenly had a batch of new songs, with Lewis among a harmonizing chorus who hold court and provide a dash of ironic, loungy sweetness and light throughout the record. That lush sound is made more enticing by its packaging: a double vinyl LP with three tracks on each side, which also makes for some light lifting. Let the songs settle in, flip, listen and repeat. Indeed, for the first two weeks after its April 22 release, *Momofuku* was, as Costello said on his label's website, available only in the archaic medium, "as the supreme being intended." (Since then it's also been available as a CD and an MP3.)

Momofuku's opening track, "No Hiding Place," is therefore appropriate in its Luddite theme, a screed against Internet trash talkers—all the sock puppets and snarky bloggers who fight and fester in the virtual gutter. Costello is, like the Dylan of "Idiot Wind," one of rock's great pugilists, crafting scorched-earth invectives with meticulous care and raw rhetorical power. He snarls at a little guy with his anonymous digital perch: "You can say anything you want to/In your fetching cloak of anonymity/Are you feeling out of breath now/In your desperate pursuit of infamy?" That word, "infamy," goes down with a lovely harmony, but Costello is just getting started. "Let's see how brave you are/When I'm about this far," Costello challenges, concluding, "You sit in judgment and bitch/Well, baby that's rich/You're nothing but a snitch." Apparently, some of us had been threatening our friend Costello—never a wise move.

Are these fictional harpies usurping Costello's cast of fictional victims? Or has he been personally affronted? "Sometimes I almost feel/Just like a human being," he seethed on "Lipstick Vogue," on *This Year's Model*. But then what, exactly, did he feel like most other times? Someone resembling the enraged, screwed-up twerp genius he was playing? Whatever. It worked, it was real and it was a rock 'n' roll victory lap: *My Aim Is True* (1977); *This Year's Model* (1978); *Armed Forces* (1979); *Get Happy!!* (1980); *Trust* (1981); and, of course, *Imperial Bedroom* (1982), a masterpiece of cabaret and orchestra pop produced by Beatles engineer Geoff Emerick that offered, on the closing chorus of "Pidgin English," a blatant message from the Beatles' first original B-side—the phrase "P.S. I Love You" repeated three times by a heavenly chorus of Costellos. There are many who go to Costello concerts only to hear songs from this early creative burst, uninterested in the maturity he was already achieving on *Imperial Bedroom*, even though he was all of 27 at the time.

Five years earlier, when *My Aim Is True* was released on the little indie label Stiff and hit the big time (reaching No. 14 in Britain and No. 32 in the United States), Costello was still a frustrated computer operator with bad teeth. For the punks, 1977 was supposed

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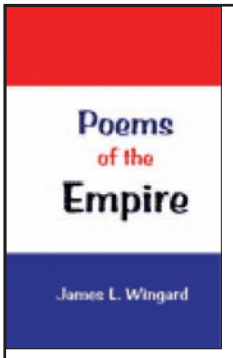

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to be year zero. The Clash laid down the law stringently in "1977": "No Elvis, Beatles, or the Rolling Stones/In 1977." It was a musical orthodoxy even the Clash couldn't sustain; by the time they released *London Calling* two years later, with its ska influences and classic rock hooks, they had fought the law and the law had not won. Costello exuded an anger that shadowed the punk rage of the '70s, but he also drew inspiration from a range of musicians—including the Beatles, Randy Newman, Bob Dylan, the Band and Joni Mitchell—whose LPs would not be found on Malcolm McLaren's turntable. He offered something more melodic, more familiar, as he clawed his way into London's screeching parade. It is astonishing to imagine that on *My Aim Is True*, backed by members of Huey Lewis's band, Costello could uncork songs that would last for decades: "Alison," "Watching the Detectives" and "The Angels Wanna Wear My Red Shoes" are still staples in Costello's set. Still, even if the songs could transcend time, they were also, in a crucial way, of the time. The year that *My Aim Is True* was released was also the year that Woody Allen's *Annie Hall* won the Oscar for Best Picture. Neurotic dweebs with glasses could be plausible leading men in 1977.

Costello's neuroses and mutations have usually coincided with the end of one love affair and the beginning of a new one. Costello's first five years of pill-popping brilliance and nasty behavior—needled along by messianic praise from rock critics—came on the heels of a 1974 shotgun wedding to Mary McManus alongside a subsequent, postfame turbulent romance with Playboy Playmate (and mother of Liv Tyler) Bebe Buell. Costello's rather unexciting song cycle *North* (2003) exploited the topic of broken hearts quite nakedly: in the first track he bids adieu to Cait O'Riordan (wife number two) and several tunes later sings about finding new love with jazz singer and pianist Diana Krall (wife number three). Elvis's midcareer creative resurgence had coincided with the bloom of new love with O'Riordan in 1985, when Costello was a battle-scarred 30 and O'Riordan a wiry 20-year-old bassist for the Pogues. Their romance came in the wake of *Goodbye Cruel World* (1984), an album so poorly produced—a duet with Darryl Hall was one of its many embarrassments—that Costello threatened to quit the music business. When the album was reissued by Rykodisc in 1995, he began the liner notes with a declaration: "Congratulations! You just bought the worst album of my career."

The year 1986 was an *annus mirabilis*: Costello reclaimed his given name of Declan McManus, sprouted a scruffy beard and regained his musical integrity with *King of America*, in which he ditched the Attractions for a vibrant, quirky ensemble that included legendary jazz bassist Ray Brown and guitarist James Burton, who had previously played with another guy named Elvis. The songwriting was never sharper, the singing as supple and emotive as ever. Costello also never seemed less interested in being commercially successful. With its slide and acoustic guitar, its upright bass and its deft explorations in musical folklore before anyone had ever heard of "roots music," this was an album destined for a cult, not the charts. "You made the girls all turn their heads, and in turn they made you miserable," Costello sang on "Little Palaces." By then, he had long realized that getting the girl is just where the trouble begins; he had, in other words, matured—precociously, of course.

Just when Costello appeared to have transformed himself—as a bearded pop seer with an obscure Irish name—he returned, cleanshaven, to his old stage name and his old band. The result, *Blood and Chocolate*, appeared months after *King of America*, and even though he had a new wife, he was about to break up his band. "Blood and chocolate" are the first words uttered on the album's first track, "Uncomplicated," and while not exactly a metaphysical conceit, it is a pairing of necessary substances. On "I Want You," "Home Is Anywhere You Hang Your Head," "Poor Napoleon" and other songs, the thing Costello craves is always blended—painfully—with the thing he needs. And however bitten

End With a Comma

End with a comma, the end
The more decisive because
Inadvertent, broken off,

The implied
Clause, whatever
Qualification or

Continuation had been
Intended, thus
Unappended, unsaid;

Call self-
Referentiality a
Trivial property, a mere

Byproduct of
Formalization, meaning nothing,
And admit it is not reflection that counts

But connection: The fact is
I could not get free, I could not get free
Of myself.

Dispense with images.
The mirror wants to be real.
You are missed.

Say more than I can say,

EDWIN FRANK

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he may have sounded emotionally, he was always in full possession of his linguistic prowess: "Since when were you so generous and inarticulate?" asked Costello, who sounded like he was neither.

If Costello had no use for his old band, he found no shortage of new musicians. And so, as if he was unloading everything he could post-Attractions, *Spike* (1989) and *Mighty Like a Rose* (1991) both contained superlative songwriting, powerful singing and swoon-worthy guest stars. "...This Town...," *Spike*'s opener, is played in an ensemble with Paul McCartney on bass and Roger McGuinn on twelve-string guitar. The albums have not gained the popularity of Costello's earlier work with the Attractions. Perhaps no one knew how to classify them. This music was all over the place, almost all of it in the third person: "Chewing Gum," a nasty take of a disappointed Asian mail-order bride, features a funk beat, fill-ins with the Dirty Dozen Brass Band and antiphonal playing from guitarist Marc Ribot, a postmodern virtuoso best known for keeping up with the genius growls emanating from the scorched lower reaches of the chest cavity of Tom Waits. "Veronica," co-written with McCartney, is a slickly produced hit of pop perfection. *Mighty Like a Rose* features "Hurry Down Doomsday (The Bugs Are Taking Over)," an apocalyptic dance number for people who don't know how to dance, and "How to Be Dumb," a "Positively 4th Street"–type revenge song aimed at Costello's ex-bassist Bruce Thomas, whose book *The Big Wheel* (1990) contained unflattering descriptions of a character known only as "the singer." Among the lines of Elvis's retort: "You always had to dress up your envy in some half-remembered philosophy."

Bruce Thomas is long gone from the band, yet Elvis the musician continues to reveal or conceal himself in elaborate ways on *Momofuku*. "Drum & Bone" wonders if human existence is all just a matter of our physical selves: "Maybe we're nothing but skin and bone/Nerves that shatter/Tongues that flatter." In the midst of this nihilism with a backbeat, Costello flashes a sense of humor that doesn't quite rise above the tune's dour premise: "And I'm trying to do the best I can/But I'm a limited, primitive kind of man." We know too well that he's neither limited nor primitive, which makes us wonder how much is tongue in cheek. Even more droll is "Mr. Feathers," a song about a pervert who ogles girls, evoking "the echo in every smile that would curl into a leer, oh my dear." All this is sung against a ragtime lilt that recalls the Kinks' "Sunny Afternoon." Mr. Feathers is unrepentant. Where is the revenge and guilt?

The two most spellbinding songs on *Momofuku*—"Harry Worth" and "Stella Hurt"—are tales of heartbreak told in the third person. "Harry Worth" shares the name of a British comic actor whose eponymous TV programs must have been present in the McManus household. Costello plays on the name with the line "She'd never know what Harry was worth." The song—about a marriage gone south—is the kind of unhappy-couple narrative that Costello has been mining since "The Long Honeymoon," from *Imperial Bedroom*, and "After the Fall," from *Mighty Like a Rose*. Pete Thomas's simple, crisp Latin beat, and Steve Nieve's hotel lounge Wurlitzer give the song a kind of rock noir kitsch, with Elvis as the Cassandra of the first verse, crooning: "We passed in the hall and I met them well/But as their carriage arrived, I found that I couldn't quite tell them." Tell them what, exactly? In the chorus, Elvis, a marriage and divorce veteran, can already see where the trouble begins:

> It's not very far from tears to mirth
> There are not many moments that will capture your breath
> It's not very long that you spend on this earth
> She'd never know just what Harry was worth

All this sounds like a combination of the bossa nova of Jobim and the hard-boiled stories of Jim Thompson, and it certainly emphasizes the "death" part of wedding vows. "Do you hear that noise?" asks Harry. "Well that once was our song." In this tragic tale, love—as the old lady on the street intones in *Annie Hall*—fades. Elvis observes, he croons, he sneers, and while the story is sad, the hooks are irresistible.

"Stella Hurt" is also a failure narrative, one based on a groove that owes a shilling or two to the Beatles' "Hey, Bulldog" and is also, as Costello says on his label's website, "a true story." It recounts, almost literally, how in the 1930s the Southern debutante Teddy Grace was plucked from obscurity to become a successful jazz singer (recording with Jack Teagarden and Bob Crosby, among others). She gave her all to the USO efforts during World War II and then, after a series of bad marriages and financial losses, fell into poverty and obscurity. It's a Depression-era narrative with a "Behind the Music" twist. What gave Teddy grace? Who made Stella hurt? As the Dickensian names accumulate, and as his own record spins, Costello imagines Stella's records gathering dust: "The night is black as cracked shellac/Abandoned in an attic/Stella is silent as the grave/Until the needle drags her through the static." All hail the record players, bringing out the dead! Once the tale is told, an inspired, hypnotic noise continues until it suddenly stops—as if a record needle has been lifted.

Momofuku's other force of reanimation is Costello's voice, an instrument that continues to confound the conventional wisdom of the fate of the midlife pop star. As Costello approached 40 and moved on to musical purgation, he did so by learning how to read and score—in collaboration with the Brodsky Quartet, a group best known for their performances of Shostakovich. In *The Juliet Letters* (1993), Elvis wove an epistolary narrative in which all the heartbreak, remorse, anger and tenderness is expressed through fictional characters. Without the support of any instrument beyond the Quartet's strings,

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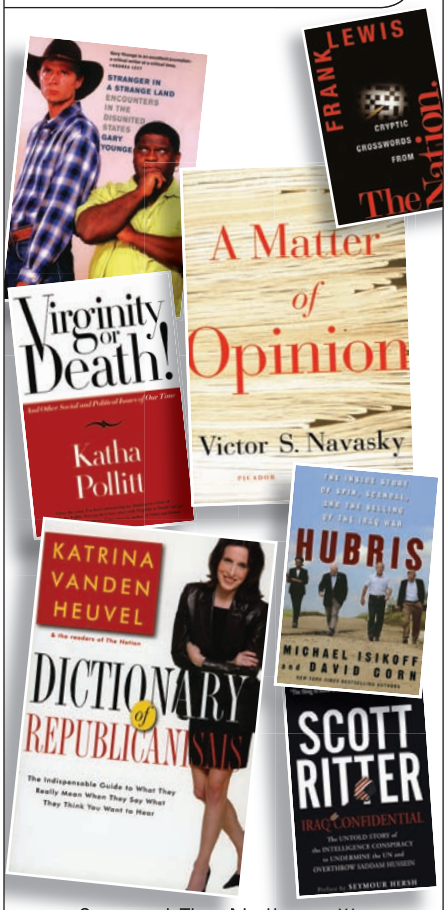

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GREAT GIFTS

his voice was naked: a dangerous weapon or a tender, heartbroken croon. His singing would never be the same again. He could give an operatic trill (as he does on "The Other End of the Telescope," co-written with Aimee Mann) or surge from a falsetto to a roaring, emotive tenor, most dramatically on "God Give Me Strength" with Burt Bacharach, who, like McCartney, was an object of Costello's teenage idolatry and, much later, a collaborator on *Painted From Memory* (1998). Do lessons in music theory make you a better rocker? They certainly expand one's musical palette, even if the main course is revenge and guilt.

With *When I Was Cruel* (2002), his first rock 'n' roll album in eight years, Costello had yet another marriage on the rocks. The album's pinnacle is "When I Was Cruel, No. 2," in which Costello, back in the first person, narrates a ceremony where his wives (exes and current) visit him like ghosts of past, present and future. It is a hypnotic seven minutes of emotions that veer beyond revenge and guilt to a more adult, forty-something ennui; Costello belts out every tortured syllable not as a young punk but as a defiant cabaret diva, vocal chops intact, *Weltzschmerz* ripened by decades of wallowing, often loudly, in public. The haunting vamp is punctuated by a sample from "Un Bacio e Troppo Poco" by an Italian singer called Mina, whose repeated syllable, sounding like "un," guides a complex song that, bitterly, mixes memory and desire:

> I exit through the spotlight glare
> I stepped out into thin air
> Into a perfume so rarefied
> "Here comes the bride"
> Not quite aside, they snide, "She's number four"
> "There's number three just by the door"
> Those in the know, don't even flatter her, they go one better
> "She was selling speedboats in a trade show when he met her"

The nastiness is deferred (at first) onto the gossipy wedding guests; the speedboat remark is too tawdry even for the serial monogamist singer. And using "snide" as a verb would be ridiculous if it didn't scan so well. After three decades of rock stardom, Elvis has more control of his adenoids. Each syllable is heavy with experience and turns droll when the maudlin occasion becomes too much. "See that girl, watch that scene, dig in the Dancing Queen," he sings, royalties due to Abba.

On *Momofuku*, singing in the first person as well, Elvis writes of being a man in lust, and in love—family-man narratives that raise the question of whether Little Elvis, 54, is happy at last, yet again. On "Flutter & Wow," which recalls the sound of the Beatles' version of Smokey Robinson's "You Really Got a Hold on Me," a recording metaphor becomes an erotic description: "Erase everything rotten/Fascinated and uptight/Make me shout out loud/Make me cry all day and night." A flaw in an archaic mode of mechanical reproduction is tied to sexual energy, with the refrain: "You make the motor in me flutter and wow." ("Wow and flutter," also the title of a Stereolab song, refers to the imperfection of analog recording.) Costello embraces the flaws in the system; via metaphor, he embodies them. "Since the imperfect is so hot in us,/Lies in flawed words and stubborn sounds," wrote Wallace Stevens with a similar metaphorical flourish. Costello, burning the midnight oil in quickie sessions while performing on Jenny Lewis's record, has his ear to the flaws of the tape unspooling before him, and he hears the crackle of love. If "My Three Sons" falls flat—it is fatherhood territory covered in better songs including Paul Simon's "St. Judy's Comet" and John Lennon's "Beautiful Boy"—it may be because he can strike gold with a positive metaphor only once in a while. He's coming to this party without the revenge and guilt we were expecting. The imperfect is so hot in us, too.

Momofuku was recorded just in time for the massive tour with the Police, its intimate ditties hauled into cavernous arenas and stadiums. Yet just when you thought Costello was grinding through a tour supporting a headliner he didn't believe in, something strange happened in Chicago on May 10. Elvis was in the middle of crooning "Alison" for the zillionth time when the headliner, the one with a name that can wound, took over the mic and busted out a verse, which then moved on to the out chorus. It seemed like an apparition, but there he was: singing with the enemy, in a performance that would conclude with Elvis not biting the hand that feeds him but holding it in a shared, shaky bow. ("Newcastle's finest," blurted Costello by the time their duet got to West Palm Beach on May 17.) Sting sang the verses, and Elvis kicked in a harmony on the upper end. When they finally reached the end, the vamp continued, as Elvis, sharing a mic with Sting, was shouting in his face, extending longer lines, first belted out from his chest, then warbled loudly with a kind of frenetic melisma. The repetitions were becoming obsessive, like a loop spun with three decades of resentment. The duel got louder and louder until countdown. So much sonic upheaval over four little words. The repeated phrase? "My aim is true." ■

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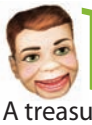

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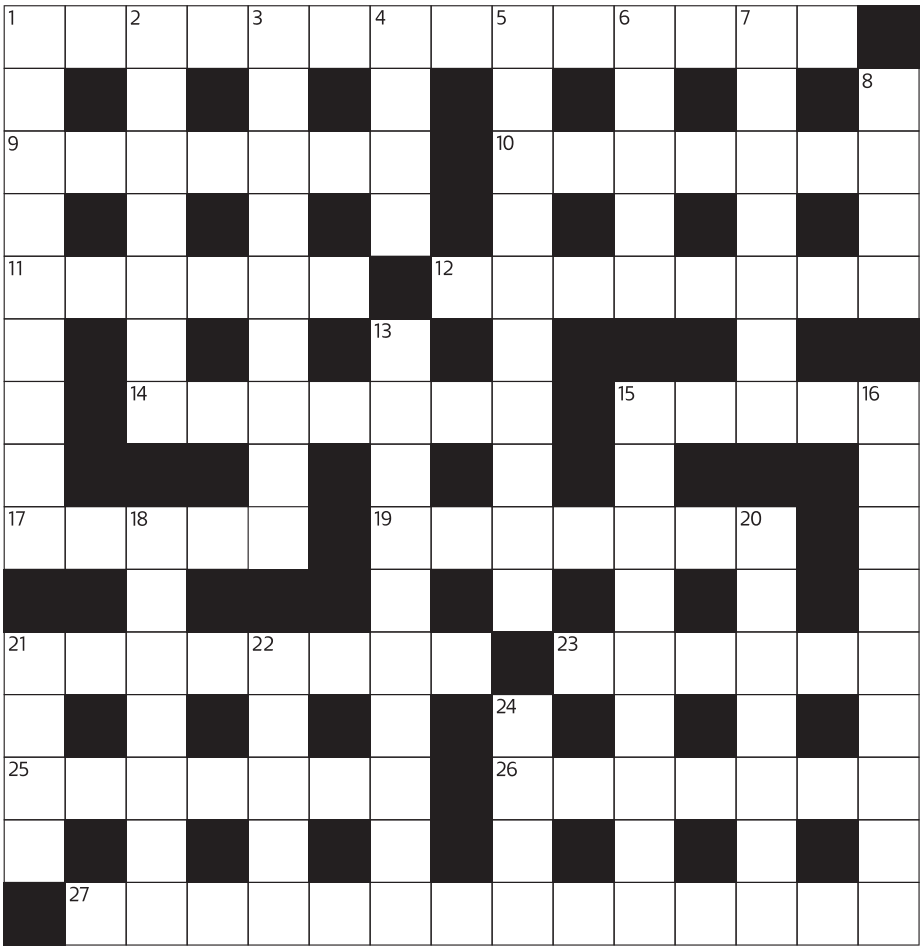

ACROSS

1 Violence stirs up tenuous, um, sluts. (14)

9 Foreshadow the left extremity? (7)

10 A dog does when pleased with the bird. (7)

11 What a horse does with Pooh, by the sound of it. (6)

12 Work gear to cover all sorts inside. (8)

14 Those in a hurry are hell for this, but it's the real mess, you see. (7)

15 When in trouble, Cyril composes what goes with a tune. (5)

17 For example, soak in water, with such a bird. (5)

19 Flamboyant manner makes Peter hurt. (7)

21 Place in Canada where my French gets later problems. (8)

23 They're not always good excuses when bail is set. (6)

25 One hears it's a long line at the dance, but it's that round thing you hit first. (3,4)

26 A mixed-up pair with an outburst of ire that could be a subject of a Cooper novel. (7)

27 One finds the door this way, and goes to a certain amount of trouble. (4,7,3)

DOWN

1 Use that old Remington, with the sort that finally sounds correct. (9)

2 Belligerent marital confusion. (7)

3 Don't tell the truth while you're getting ready to pounce! (3,2,4)

4 Take something to pieces, being sort of round, but not right. (4)

5 Without the slightest sign of weakness. (10)

6 Where a poetic tiger was found to get to reign improperly. (5)

7 More of a standard type, but you could use it to hold things together. (7)

8 What a Greek cross might stand for at times. (4)

13 Chagrined when the bloke has hit the pavement? (10)

15 Not a long-distance affair, which shouldn't cost more than a relatively small coin. (5,4)

16 Where the lookout stays, and sort of owns the ridge around it. (5,4)

18 A versification that is sort of round, with a bad mark inside. (7)

20 Bring me up to the drinking spot, and finally go with the ban on shipping. (7)

21 One well-versed trio that couldn't see how to squeak by on the run. (4)

22 Ways alternative to those short notices. (5)

24 Mimics some of Tarzan's friends? (4)

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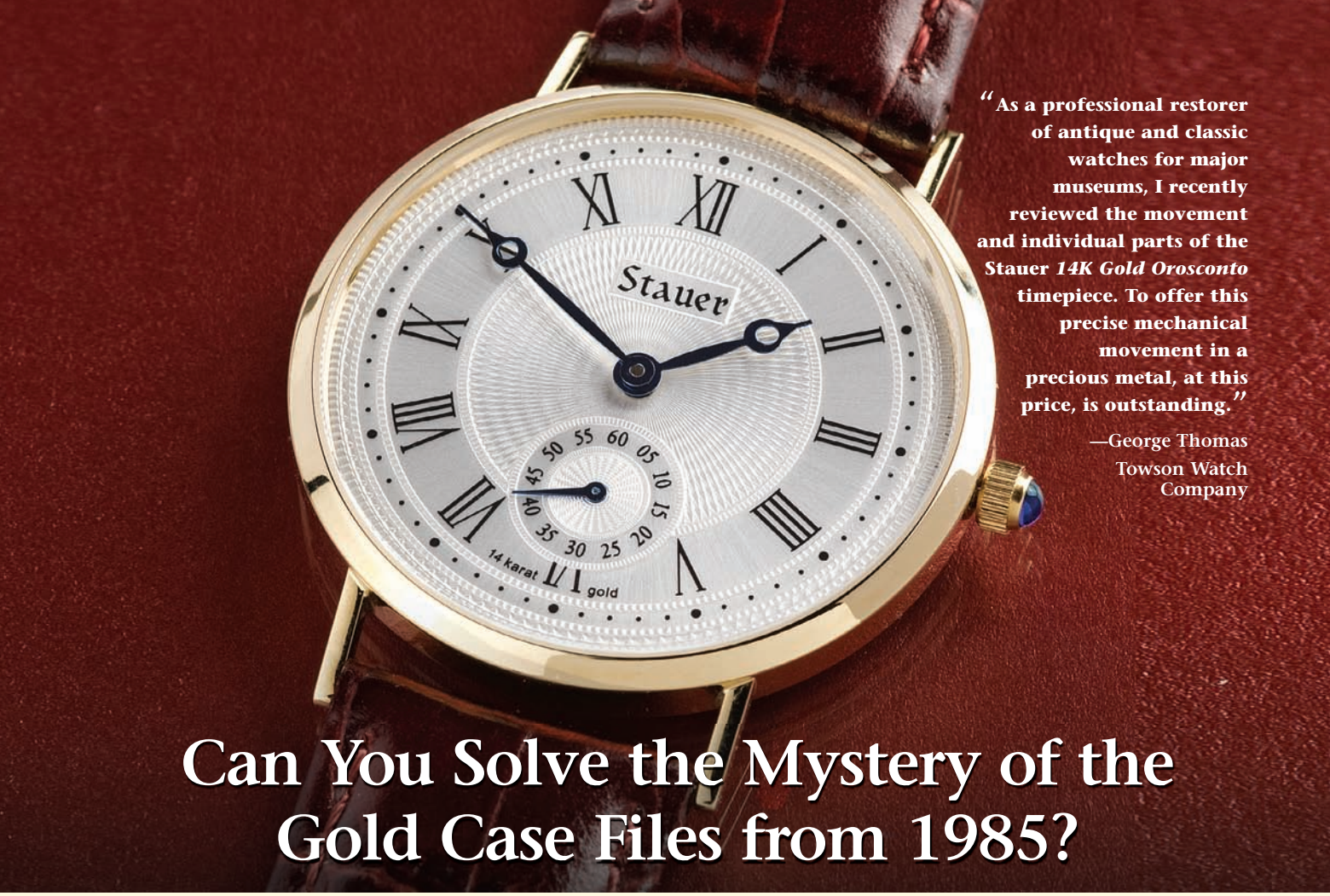

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